

FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION:
THE JOURNEY TOWARDS MISSIONAL CHURCH LIFE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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MAY, 2019

To Carol

My loving wife and partner in life,
whose faithful support, and patient listening
greatly encouraged me in this journey

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PREFACE

The idea for this thesis-project came from the required reading for my first year residency. I was struck by the thought that the desire for a congregation to maintain what they had could prevent them from pursuing God's mission in a changing cultural environment. Most people do not like the idea change and it requires work hard to maintain the status quo. Yet, for the church to flourish, it has to reach out with the good news of Jesus. Then I wondered if it were possible to re-plant a missionary church in an existing, traditional, evangelical church setting. My church planting friends say no. They say it is easier to give birth to something new than raise the dead. Yet as a pastor of a traditional, evangelical Baptist church, I believe that God can revitalize and retool his church for mission. From a practical perspective I wanted to discover how best to lead my congregation on the journey of moving from maintenance to mission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Dr. Stephen Russell, Rev. Sam Huggard, Rev. Shane Good, and Rev. Aled Griffith for allowing me to interview them and share the stories of transformation within their churches. Their wisdom and friendship have been invaluable. I want to thank my wife, Carol, for proofreading my endless drafts. I so appreciate and thank my advisor, Dr. Tom Herrick, for the guidance and encouragement he has given me in the process of writing this thesis. The First Baptist Church of Pocasset family has been a source of great encouragement and continual prayer support throughout this Thesis-Project. Finally, I want to acknowledge the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ who has given me the ability to complete this work. To Christ belongs all the glory!

ABBREVIATIONS

Gen: Genesis

Pss: Psalms

Isa: Isaiah

Matt: Matthew

Rom: Romans

1 Cor: 1 Corinthians

2 Cor: 2 Corinthians

Gal: Galatians

Eph: Ephesians

Phil: Philippians

1 Tim: 1 Timothy

2 Tim: 2 Timothy

Heb: Hebrews

Jas: James

1 Pet: 1 Peter

ABSTRACT

Western culture has changed from a Christian to a post-Christian perspective. As American culture transitions into a post-Christian framework, the church is faced with monumental challenges. The ministry programs that once were very effective in a Christian culture now do not work well. Will the church seek to maintain the type of ministry and cultural influence it has enjoyed over the past two centuries or will it respond to this new opportunity, making adaptive changes in order to engage the post-Christian culture with a fresh expression of the unchanging gospel? The goal of this thesis-project is to discover through best practices guiding principles how to help traditional, evangelical churches in their journey from a maintenance model to a missional model of church life. I believe the greatest opportunity for churches to engage our changing culture lies before us. My desire is to make a small contribution to prepare the church to engage the culture and share the gospel in a culturally relevant way, making disciples for the glory of God.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND SETTING

From Maintenance to Mission

As the American culture transitions toward a post-modern, post-Christian cultural framework, the church is providentially placed in a unique ministry opportunity to reach a disenfranchised generation of young adults who are searching for spiritual significance, yet who have rejected the religious mindsets of traditional church. To take advantage of this opportunity, the traditional evangelical church will need to reconsider its philosophy of and approach to ministry. Failure to do so may result in a continued decline in the percentage of Americans participating in church life. Demographic studies have documented a decrease in church attendance over the past few decades, especially among the younger generation.¹

One may think that the church in America is growing rapidly with the proliferation of mega-churches. However, church growth has not kept pace with the United States over-all population growth. In his detailed study published in *The American Church in Crisis*, David Olson documents that in 2005 the average church attendance was 19.5% of the American population, which is down from an average of 41% in 1939.² Between 1990 and 2005 the United States population grew by 52 million

1. Research shows trends that indicate a decline in church attendance over the past decade. The research suggests that there is a decline in church attendance with the younger generation according to Kinnerman's research in his book *UnChristian*. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 22.

A recent article by the Barna Group ("10 Facts about America's Churchless," Cities and States Report,

2. David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), Kindle. Chapter 1.

while church attendance over the same period remained stable at 52 million³ Olson also discovered that 52% of churches in America were in decline, losing over 10% of their membership over a 6-year period from 1999-2005. During that period 31% of churches grew more than 10%, while 17% remained stable in their growth.⁴ One of the factors given for the decline in church attendance was the inability of church leadership to adapt to cultural change. "Many churches mistake culturally bound ministry styles for core theology. For many churches, their music stories, programs, and means of community outreach no longer resonate with those outside their church."⁵ By culturally bound, Olsen is referring to ministry models which do not contextualize the message of the gospel, nor their means of communicating that message effectively to the people they are seeking to reach.

By its nature, the church is to be culturally distinct from the society at large. The church is to be a 'chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet 2:9 NIV) in order to call people out of darkness into Christ's light. Yet in this divine calling, the people of God need to relate to the culture where God has placed them. Consequently, the church's ministry must seek to be culturally relevant. Without relevant points of communication between the church and society, the gospel can be easily misunderstood, misrepresented and even not heard by non-Christians.

Another factor in the apparent growth of the evangelical church is the migration

3. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*. Chapter 2.

4. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*. Chapter 8.

5. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*. Chapter 8.

of saints to larger church ministries. As John S. Dickerson writes in *The Great Evangelical Recession*:

You've probably seen a headline like this one: 'America's 100 Largest Churches Doubled in Size During the Decade!' . . . We might read a headline like that and assume that evangelicalism is doubling, or at least increasing . . . but, an understanding of larger trends tells us that at least three in four of those 'new' attendees left another church to attend the growing mega-church . . . more people are leaving smaller churches to attend larger ones . . . even as the total number of folks attending any evangelical church slowly declines.⁶

If you are a leader in a smaller evangelical church, this trend is discouraging. When we hear about churches growing larger, we assume that they are reaching people for Christ. In fact, a sizable percentage of the growth of larger churches is from transfer growth. In contrast to the marginal growth of the church, since 1991 the growth of the United States population is up 15% and the growth of the un-churched population increased by 92%! ⁷ It appears that the church in America according to attendance statistics is in decline. According to these statistics in America, it takes the combined effort of 85 Christians working for one year to produce one disciple.⁸ Perhaps it is time for the American church to reassess its outreach strategies.

Even though larger churches can be successful and beneficial to the cause of Christ, the truth is that most people attend a smaller size church often struggling to maintain its life and ministry. In their struggle with relevance in a changing cultural landscape, smaller churches typically respond with a 'circle the wagons' mentality. It is only natural to hold on to or maintain one's current status for as long as possible.

6. John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 23.

7. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2008), 11-12.

8. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 11-12.

Sometimes this move to conserve current ecclesiastical structure and life is seen as remaining true to the gospel in the face of cultural change. However, such a stance will further isolate churches from the opportunities the Lord is giving to minister the gospel in a non-Christian culture. Is there another response the church may consider? Has God called His church to more than maintaining the status quo? How can a smaller church prepare for effective growth?

Without a doubt, the church is facing challenges in ministry as well as unprecedented opportunities. In order to understand the cultural challenges that we, as the church, are facing today, we must first understand the concept of 'Christendom'. In the third century when the Roman Emperor Constantine conferred favored status to Christianity, Christendom was born. In the centuries that followed, Christianity was integrally connected with the power and authority of the state, and with a vision of creating and maintaining a Christian culture. In Europe, Christendom was defined as the legal status of the church established as the official religion by the Emperor or, in other words, the state church. In America, Christendom "is often associated with the type of relationship that has developed between the church and the broader culture."⁹ Though the United States does not have an established church, Christendom defines the functional reality of the church's position in society. This privileged position has given the church certain expectations to address issues of national policy and influence public opinion and morality.

9. Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 48.

The combination of expected privilege and religious competition translated into the formation of a functional Christendom and a church culture. Such a culture placed the churches clearly at the center of public life, where they attempted to influence policy, morals, and institutions while building a host of private institutions under their control.¹⁰

The evangelical church, still operating within a Christendom mindset, expecting the same privileged position, suddenly finds itself on the fringe of society. All the old ways of doing ministry and evangelism are no longer as effective as they once were. Churches are forced to reconsider their role and calling in society if they hope to reach the next generation with the gospel. The question remains, how do we navigate the change necessary to effectively minister in a post-Christian culture?

As Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson write in their manual for church planting, titled *The Kingdom Quest*: “We believe the process of ‘doing’ church, particularly in the western world, has been more focused on developing people who attend church rather than developing disciples who are the church.”¹¹ I find this statement to be painfully accurate. In the many classes, seminars or conferences that I have either taught or attended, the goal has been primarily to give biblical information, with the unstated assumption that the student would put the information taught into practice. When simply knowing about the Bible (doctrine) is the goal, then faithful church attendance is the means to achieve that goal. In many pastor's meetings, the first question asked is how many people attend their church on Sunday mornings? Everyone knows that the answer is a measure of one's success in ministry. There is a huge difference between

10. Guder, *Missional Church*, 50.

11. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Kingdom Quest* (St. Charles: ChurchSmart Resources, 2007), 13.

someone who faithfully attends church every week and someone who wholeheartedly lives out the teachings of Christ during the week. So the authors conclude, "we suggest that making disciples is a great way of planting a church, developing leaders, and fostering a movement that might impact our cities, and dare we say, our world."¹² I believe that the key to not only church planting, but also church renewal, is a return to the original commission of Jesus to make disciples of all nations. The church in America has been marginalized and tamed by the surrounding culture because she has lost focus on her primary mission, and thus finds herself in a survival mode.

Examples of churches who have lost their sense of mission abound. Consider the older, evangelical church that once had been the center of life in the community. Now parishioners struggle to maintain the old, historic building with the dwindling number of regular attendees. There is the church that has preserved its worship tradition, refusing to adjust or contextualize its message for a changing cultural setting. And there is the new church plant that has surveyed the community to discover the kind of church those in that community really want to attend, and then produced it. In each case, the focus could easily move toward preserving or promoting something other than the primary mission of making disciples. Even a compassionate desire to evangelize does not automatically develop people into disciples of the Lord.

12. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Kingdom Quest*, 13.

Cultural Factors Contributing to a Maintenance Mentality

Attractional Christianity

The gospel of Jesus, when properly understood, is attractive. Discovering that God's love for wayward humanity can transform lives and give people a purpose for living is always appealing. People were attracted to Jesus and his teachings. The fact that the Good News of Jesus is attractive is different from the methodology of attractional Christianity.

During the twentieth century, with the proliferation of technology, new industries unique to our culture developed. The advertising and entertainment industries flourished with the advent of radio, television and film technologies. With the development of many new laborsaving devices such as automobiles, kitchen appliances, and tools, more people had time available during the week for recreation and entertainment. A century earlier many of the social engagement options were centered around church activities. Today there is much more competition for the attention of the average person. Church services and activities now compete with the theater, television, shopping, social media, and youth sports. The entertainment value for any activity becomes an unconscious measuring stick for its perceived value.

In order to compete, churches began to incorporate entertainment value into their activities. As Madison Avenue honed the advertising industry, so church ministries began to see the value in developing their marketing plans, thus adopting a secular business model to promote their unique branding. The church growth literature with all the stories of successful, growing churches promoted the ideas and principles of

marketing into evangelical circles. We see this clearly today in the trend of ‘church shopping’. The unintended consequence of churches adopting the ways of the business world into their evangelistic strategies was the introduction of consumerism into the life of Christianity. As the authors of *The Organic Reformation* boldly state:

Hollywood is no longer the ‘entertainment capital of the world’ – it is now your local church mega-plex or your neighborhood house churches with DVD worship on the 60 inch LCD TV.

The church in the West bent on attracting people to a location has become a consumer-driven vendor of spiritual goods and services. In short, it has become a circus where the performers are polished and the various acts of the performance timed to the minute. Churches, which follow this path often end up competing for the same market share – Christians in other churches.¹³

This is born out in the Pew Research Center statistics quoted in an August 30, 2016 blog by Karina Kreminski. According to the Pew Research Center, 83% of Americans who looked for a new church said the quality of preaching played an important role in their choice. In that survey, 79% said that being welcomed by clergy and lay-leaders was important to them while 74% based their choice on the style of the worship service. Seven-in-ten chose the location as an important factor while 56% cited the quality of children's programs.¹⁴

On the one hand, church leaders could use this information on potential church members’ preferences to work on improving sermons, enhancing worship experiences and developing programs so as to attract more people. However, on the other hand,

13. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation* (Manchester: PraxisMedia, 2009), 17.

14. Karina Kreminski, “Church Leaders: 3 Questions When Dealing with Consumerism,” Missio Alliance (blog), August 2016. Accessed February 10, 2018. www.missioalliance.org/questions-leaders-must-ask-culture.

one could view this research data as confirmation that “people still see the church as a vendor of religious goods and services, primarily existing in order to serve its members.”¹⁵ There is nothing wrong with working to make worship services inspiring or improving one's ability to clearly communicate biblical truth. However, the missional focus of the church can be displaced by an emphasis on attracting new members through preaching and worship styles alone. An emphasis on these elements alone cannot make mature disciples. Yet, when combined with a small group mentoring process of equipping for the work of the ministry, disciple-making is the result.

Consumerism

American culture is now *driven* by consumerism. Though American consumerism seems to be a relatively new phenomenon, it was planted with the seeds of the Enlightenment. As Kevin Ford comments in his book *Transforming Church*:

Consumerism has its roots in the dawning of the era of Enlightenment and the beginning of the modern world, with its attending philosophy – modernism. During the modern era, God was often viewed as stripped of His relevance because He was invisible to the empiricist – and irrelevant to the five senses. Reason replaced faith as the arbiter of truth. And in a world without God, the autonomous individual replaced the community as the center of reality.

The philosophy of individualism was foundational to the forming of our nation. Following the Jeffersonian belief that every person is entitled to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” our Constitution began a grand experiment with individualism.”¹⁶

15. Kreminski, “Church Leaders: 3 Questions When Dealing with Consumerism.”

16. Kevin Ford, *Transforming Church :Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 29.

Consumerism, like materialism, is a self-centered way of perceiving the world. At its core, consumerism rests on the idea of extreme individualism, or the right to make one's own choices and decisions regardless of the effect on others. In a consumer-driven culture, the idea is promoted that personal happiness can be found in accumulating material goods and/or achieving personal success. It places value and worth not on who a person is or one's character, but rather on what a person can do or on the size of one's personal wealth. The American Dream is redefined not as an equal opportunity, but as the entitlement to wealth and success. Ford aptly describes it as follows: "Simply put, consumerism is the idea that personal happiness is equated with acquiring and consuming products – usually alone. We choose our 'community' based on our 'consumption.' When our individual tastes or desires change, so do our friends."¹⁷

How does consumerism affect church life? First, consumerism is antithetical to authentic community. Living in relationship with others, whether it is a family or church community, is based on a common responsibility, a common goal or mission, and a commitment to serve one another. Consumerism is all about 'me', not 'we'. It produces a group of people seeking self-fulfillment, demanding entitlements, and concerned that their own needs or desires are met with excellence. In consumerism, the church member is the customer, and the gospel is the product. The church member's job is to attend the meeting and receive (consume) the teachings. If the customers are not happy with the way the product is being served, they can go to another church that can better meet their needs. How do church leaders bring correction, challenge members to grow

17. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 30.

as disciples, or equip the church for mission in this context? A consumer-oriented ministry lives in fear of a newer, better church that will steal away the market share of customers.

We can see this with the current 'church shopping' culture within American Christianity. The customer's interest and feedback drive product development today. This attitude can be readily seen in the ministry of the church. A generation ago people would attend a church in their neighborhood or would affiliate with the denomination in which they grew up. Today people will shop for a church that will meet their families' needs the best and will migrate to another church if they are dissatisfied with the service. Smaller churches long to offer the programming needed to satisfy church shoppers but again lack the resources. Many Christian families will seek a church where they will receive a blessing rather than a church that will train them to be a blessing through holistic discipleship.

Even larger churches are negatively affected by a consumer orientation. As Kevin Ford notes about one large church he worked with:

On the outside, the church looked vibrant and healthy. But a look inside revealed a group of people who were 'consuming' the church's products without connecting to each other in meaningful relationships or engaging in the local community with the transforming power of the gospel.

A 'successful' church can offer outstanding programs and ministries, but if its members are not being transformed, it is not a healthy church.¹⁸

The effects of bringing a business model into church ministry are wide-spread in both large and small church bodies. Larger churches have a difficult time producing a true

18. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 28.

Christian community where discipleship most naturally occurs. Much of the church's energy and financial resources go into maintaining the massive weekly programming needed to keep the church ministry going. Smaller churches lack the resources and marketing savvy to attract the larger numbers and consequently struggle to keep the ministry going. In either case, it is easy to drift into maintenance mode. Perhaps a return to Jesus' Great Commission to make *disciples*, not just happy costumers, would be appropriate.

Teaching/Attendance vs. Discipleship

In most churches, the job of the members is to attend the various worship services and Bible studies offered and, for those truly committed, to staff the programs the church is offering to the community. As a pastor, I will be the first to assert the importance of attending worship services and Bible studies because the teaching of God's Word is essential to spiritual growth. However, as a pastor, I have mistakenly believed that because someone has heard the message I preached, and even complimented the message, that he or she has incorporated that Biblical truth into their life and is actually living it out. I have assumed that a teaching heard was a teaching learned and applied to life. To illustrate this point Jesus told the parable of the two sons who were ordered by their father to go and work in the field. One of them refused but later changed his mind and obeyed his father, while the second agreed but never obeyed. Which one was obedient? It was the one who put his Father's word into

practice and obeyed his Father.¹⁹ Life transformation, which is the goal of discipleship, occurs more in the living room than in the classroom. The thirst to know more Biblical truth without actually practicing it has contributed to the loss of influence of the church in America.

These factors have contributed to the general decline of the church in America and specifically on Cape Cod. There are many churches on Cape Cod with less than 100 members that are struggling to survive. Though the culture around us is changing, the commission of the Lord has not changed. With courage and faith, a church can move from maintenance into mission. The goal is not mere survival but obedience to the call of Jesus, for the fields are still white with the harvest.

My Research Question

In the first year of my Doctor of Ministry program I read Stuart Murray's book *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*, in which he wrote about the balance between a church's maintenance and its mission.²⁰ Often the need to survive or maintain the ministry becomes more important than the mission or reason for existence. When maintenance takes priority it chokes out the spiritual life and growth of the church. Observing how that is evident in many evangelical Churches today is what led me to ask these questions: "What is the best process to help the First Baptist Church of Pocasset

19. Matt 21:28-31 (NIV).

20. Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2001). I have found the detail discussion in chapter 5 on how the church has moved into a maintenance stance over the past few generations to be very enlightening.

move from a maintenance mindset to a missional mindset? How will their theological perspective need to change and what will need to change in their practice?”

I will begin by defining the terms *maintenance* and *mission*. Maintenance would be the energy needed to keep the systems of an organization functioning. For a church, it would be running programs such as Sunday school or youth ministry, and all that is needed for Sunday worship. Mission is reaching out beyond the membership to serve the local community and engage in communicating the Good News of Jesus to those who do not know Him.

I would be wrong to suggest that maintenance is to be abandoned if mission is to be engaged. Every organism or organization must have a system in place to maintain its life or it will die. Many churches struggle with the balance between maintenance and mission. When the desire to maintain what they already have becomes central to the life of the church, then mission is relegated to a committee or a special offering to help those specially trained for mission.²¹ Churches in a maintenance mode can be of any size, and they will tend to be more focused on a pastoral model of ministry, where caring for church members are the primary task of the pastoral staff. Smaller churches can be in a survival mode by which they desire to ‘keep the doors open’ for as long as possible. Mission, on the other hand, focuses on reaching beyond the walls of the church, seeking to be salt and light in the community, and bringing the influence of God's Kingdom rule. Alan Hirsch, in *The Forgotten Ways*, summarizes the tension between mission and maintenance as follows:

21. Murray, *Church Planting*, 106-108.

When the Christendom model of church fails to respond to outside stimuli by disengaging from the liminal experience and becomes purely self-referential, then you can be sure it is on its way out. In other words, it has lost its missional focus, which should drive it outside its own boundaries. In so many churches the mission of the church has actually become the maintenance of the institution itself. This was never Jesus's intention. Our goal in organizing as a people is not to set up, preserve, and maximize an institution over its life cycle, but to extend God's mission to the world. Our primary aim is not to perpetuate the church as an institution, but to follow Jesus into his mission in the world. "Christianity is concerned with the unfolding of the Kingdom of God in this world, not the longevity of organizations."²²

Kevin G. Ford in his book *Transforming Church*²³ shares five movements or themes that help guide a church toward effective mission. These movements have been discerned through surveying and working with numerous churches. Each one of the movements/ themes contrasts a cultural dysfunction that needs to be identified and discarded with the biblical dynamic that must replace it. The movements are as follows: (1) moving from consumerism toward community, (2) moving from incongruence toward code (DNA), (3) moving from autocracy toward shared leadership, (4) moving from cloister toward mission, and (5) moving from inertia toward reinvention. Each one of these movements must be addressed and processed to help any church family move from survival into embracing a clear understanding of God's Kingdom mission for them. For example, the church is called to be a community of God's people living out Kingdom values, obeying the Lord's calling corporately, doing the good works they were created to do (Ephesians 2:10) and thus living in sync with God's DNA, sharing leadership and

22. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 231.

23. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 10-12. Ford outlines these movements in the introduction and then illustrates how they impact specific churches throughout his book.

multiplying leaders, taking seriously God's missional call to make disciples, and actually moving out in faith and putting God's plan into action. I will address each one of these movements more thoroughly in chapter three.

My Thesis-Project

In my thesis-project, I will develop a plan to transition the church I serve from maintenance into God's mission. My thesis simply states that to move a church from maintenance to mission will require a holistic, Biblical disciple-making process established on a theological foundation of the Kingdom and mission of God, and a renewed Christology and ecclesiology that flows out of mission. To accomplish this there needs to be a shift in the church's understanding of its primary purpose from maintaining the institution to fulfilling the mission of God to make disciples. Understanding how Jesus made disciples and following his model is key to a healthy, holistic discipleship framework and practice.

In my research, I conducted structured interviews with four pastors who have been instrumental in transitioning churches where they have served through the process of renewal and into the mission of God for their context. A major component will be their success in releasing a disciple-making culture within the church's ministry expression.

The core of church planting, church multiplication movements, and existing church renewal is the ability to replicate the life of Jesus in other people – i.e. disciple-making. For a church to move out of survival mode into a missional mode it must

recapture the biblical call of Jesus to disciple-making as the main practice and life of the church. Part of my research involved interviews of pastors on Cape Cod, focusing on their understanding and view of disciple-making. I discovered that the majority of pastors I interviewed limited discipleship to the classroom as an academic class or knowledge-based learning, rather than as an integrated whole life process.²⁴ Teaching another class or conducting another seminar alone will not produce well-rounded disciples of Jesus. Spiritual and character development is the result of being a part of a spiritual family or community of faith.

There is a great need for the practice of biblical discipleship to be reintroduced to the church in America. Looking at the statistics on the moral behavior of church members compared to the general population; we see little difference between these two groups. In his book *UnChristian*, David Kinnerman discusses the hypocritical image of the church today. As a Barna researcher, he states:

Let's start with the most obvious reason: our lives don't match our beliefs. In many ways, our lifestyles and perspectives [as Christians] are no different from those of anyone around us.

In one study conducted by our firm, we explored more than one hundred variables related to values, behaviors, and lifestyles, including both religious and nonreligious areas of life. We compared born-again Christians with non-born-again adults. We discovered that born-agains were distinct on some religious variables, most notably owning more Bibles, going to church more often, and donating money to religious nonprofits (especially a church). However, when it came to nonreligious factors – the substance of people's daily choices, actions, and attitudes – there were few meaningful gaps between born again Christians and non-born-agains.²⁵

24. Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 16.

25. Kinnaman and Lyons, *UnChristian*, 45-46.

The believer's view of divorce, cohabitation before marriage, pornography, use of money, and attitudes toward work and leisure time reflect more of our culture than of Scripture.²⁶

Bill Hull in his book *The Disciple-Making Pastor* makes this assessment of the American church: "The evangelical church has become weak, flabby, and too dependent on artificial means that can only simulate real spiritual power. Churches are too little like training centers to shape up the saints, and too much like cardiopulmonary wards at the local hospital."²⁷ He goes on to say that we have produced self-indulgent Christians who see themselves as consumers of religion, who will tend to flock to larger super churches because of the entertainment they offer. Instead of measuring effectiveness by the number of people in attendance at the Sunday worship service, we need to evaluate how those in attendance live their lives. "The crisis at the heart of the church is a crisis of product."²⁸ As the saying goes, 'Your system is perfectly designed to yield the results you are getting'.

The church in America has lost focus on her God-given calling and purpose. In the book, *Discipleshift*, Putman and Harrington define churches today under four different categories according to their stated purposes.²⁹ Churches in the first category see their primary purpose as educational. The main purpose of the church is to teach God's Word with the classroom as the method to accomplish this purpose. Discipleship would occur primarily in the classroom via Sunday morning message, Sunday School,

26. Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *Discipleshift* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2013), 20.

27. Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Tarrytown: Revell, 1988), 12.

28. Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, 14.

29. Putman and Harrington, *Discipleshift*, 25-27.

and Bible studies. The church becomes an educational center to teach God's Word with the assumption that it will be obeyed. The second major category of churches focuses on attracting people to their services, and their method is entertainment. For them, the major event would be the Sunday service, which is designed to be relevant to life and to help people make decisions for Christ. Discipleship is assumed to happen through church attendance or possibly through a small group Bible study during the week. One of the major success stories of this kind of church model is Willow Creek Church. Several years ago, Pastor Bill Hybels discovered they were great at bringing people to Christ, but not effective at growing new Christians into mature followers of Jesus. I admire his courage in seeking to realign his ministry priorities to address the issue of practical discipleship.³⁰

The third category is that of missional churches who have an emphasis on practical outreach with a service-opportunity as their methodology. Every Christian has a God-given purpose to be lived out in practical community service. Feeding the poor, working for social justice, and helping the disadvantaged are some of the ways this purpose is expressed. Churches embracing this emphasis seek to restore the justice motive to ministry with authentic care for the lost and disadvantaged.

The last category is 'house churches' or organic churches, which have an emphasis on developing strong, Biblical relationships. These churches tend to be

30. Bill Hybels commissioned the study of his church published in *Reveal Where Are You?*, a book describing the problem and the steps taken to address it. Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal Where Are You?* (Barrington:Willow Creek Association, 2007).

smaller, with less organizational structure. Believers gather for informal teaching, family style worship, and relationship building activities and fellowship.

One more category that Putnam and Harrington did not include would be Pentecostal or Charismatic churches that emphasize revival through the power of the Holy Spirit. Their unique contribution adds dynamic worship with the expectation of the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit evidenced in miracles. The supernatural presence of God is integral to the church service but also is seen in the community as disciples naturally live the supernatural life in their homes, places of work, or in their neighborhoods. Hill Song Church in Australia and Bethel Church in Redding California would be examples of this category.

Books have been written on each one of these categories describing the Biblical reasons why each one is important and beneficial. Most would agree that education, inspiration, mission-oriented service, and relationships are all key components of any God-honoring, biblically oriented church. Yet something is missing. Jesus gave only one commission to His Church, and that was to make disciples of all nations. Though making disciples involves education, winning the lost through evangelism, serving the poor, building relationships, and reliance on the supernatural power of God, without a focus on disciple-making as our goal, the church will remain ineffective in obeying Jesus' mission. The classroom alone cannot develop a mature disciple. Going on a short-term missions trip, though potentially life changing, will not, in itself, produce maturity in a believer. But when disciple-making is at the core of every activity and church ministry, it will change how we measure success. Success is measured not by attendance to

services, courses completed, mission outreaches planned, or fellowship meals shared, but "by how many people are being loved and led into the way of Jesus, are coming to Christ and following Him. It measures how many people are being transformed into Christ's likeness and are pursuing his Kingdom mission. It values and measures how many are actually becoming disciples who make disciples".³¹ Each of the church categories listed above has strengths and weaknesses. Each church leader strives to make disciples, and some succeed in the process. Yet, one missing ingredient in the church today is an effective strategy to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus given to the church in Matt 28:18-20, to make disciples who can make disciples.

Reggie McNeal argues in the introduction to *Missional Renaissance* that "Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity. ... To think and to live missionally means seeing all life as a way to be engaged with the mission of God in the world."³² He views the missional church movement not as one option among many, but as the key to the reformation of the church today. He writes:

This missional understanding of Christianity is undoing Christianity as a religion. The expression of the Christian movement in North America is fundamentally altering before our eyes. The shifts are tectonic. They involve both form and content. These developments go way beyond denominational affiliations, party labels (liberal, conservative, mainline, evangelical), corporate worship styles (contemporary, traditional), program methodological approaches (purpose-driven, seeker-friendly), or even cultural stances (post-modern, emergent, emerging). The missional development goes to the very heart of what the church is, not just what it does. It redefines the church's role in the world in a way that breaks sharply with prevailing church notions. These differences are so huge as

31. Putman and Harrington, *Discipleshift*, 31.

32. Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2009), xiv.

to make missional and nonmissional expressions of Christianity practically unrecognizable to each other.³³

Whether or not Reggie McNeal is correct in his assessment or prediction, the fact remains that recovering an understanding of the mission of God to transform lives and society through the process of disciple-making is close to God's heart.

Thus, my thesis seeks to discern the best practices for developing a strategy to transition the church I serve from maintenance to embracing the mission of God as a way of life. These best practices will be discerned from interviews with pastors involved in this process and literature that has been published on this topic.

My Context

I serve as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Pocasset located in the town of Bourne, MA on Cape Cod. First Baptist Church of Pocasset has had a long history of faithful service to the Lord since its start in 1838. Experiencing significant growth in the 1950's and 1960's, the church building was moved to its current location in the village center, and an education wing was built in 1958. First Baptist and St. John's Catholic Church located just down the road from each other at one time represented the social and spiritual life of the village. Today, much of Bourne has a significant un-churched population. Children of church members either moved away or did not follow their parents into church membership.

33. McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, xiv.

In the late 1980's First Baptist grew to an average Sunday morning attendance of 200 people. In the mid 1990's the church experienced a major conflict resulting in losing more than one half of the membership. Since that time the church has experienced a continued decline in attendance (partially due to families moving out of state) to its current size of about 40 people. Despite the downward trend, a committed core of believers has covenanted together to be the church of Jesus and to work toward renewal.

During the fall of 2014 the pastor of First Baptist Church of Pocasset, Rev. Ed de la Cour, approached me about succeeding him in the role of pastor of First Baptist when he retired. After prayer, my wife and I believed that the Lord confirmed this call and, with the agreement of the church body, we began a one-year transition. Pastor Ed retired in December 2015 and I assumed full responsibility as Pastor in January 2016.

Today, our church community ranges in age from toddlers to retirees in their 70's. There are a few young families with children. About 25% of our community is in the 40-59-age bracket and about 50% are in the 60-75-age bracket. For a small church, we have a variety of nationalities present: Cambodian, Greek, and Puerto Rican. Recently our church participated in a Natural Church Development (NCD) survey³⁴ to assess our ministry strengths and weaknesses around eight core values. The NCD survey results indicate our top four strengths as (1) Passionate Spirituality, (2) Loving Relationships, (3) Empowering Leadership, and (4) Inspiring Worship Services. First Baptist is an evangelical church committed to Biblical truth, a personal relationship and walk with

34. The Survey was taken in May 2015. Information on Natural Church Development can be found at www.ncd-international.org.

Jesus, and a desire to lead others to faith in Christ. Our weekly Bible study groups are attended by over 50% of our church body.

The results of the NCD survey were very encouraging to the church body. First Baptist Church, having experienced the trauma of division, and the attrition of members moving out of state, received the results as an affirmation of their identity and health as a church. Pastor Ed and I were greatly encouraged, and somewhat surprised, by the health of the church body. This confirmed to us that the relational foundation of the church was healthy enough to develop the ministry and mission of First Baptist.

During this transition period and for the two years since, a church consultant, Dr. John Kimball, has coached our church. In assessing the needs of the church body, Dr. Kimball developed a Summary Report from the interviews he conducted with church leaders and members. In his report, he listed our current strengths as follows:

- Deep, abiding relationships within the church family
- Strong spiritual interconnectedness between members
- Fruitful evangelistic efforts integrated into the church's ministry (to AA groups)
- Successful delegation and sharing of ministry to the body
- Relevant, biblically sound preaching.³⁵

In summary, First Baptist, my church context, is a small, evangelical church with healthy relationships, a mixture of young and mature believers with a traditional view of church ministry. Their declining attendance is a major concern. The outreach strategies used in the past have proven ineffective for today's culture. The church is in a

35. The report was made in November 2015.

maintenance pattern of ministering to the faithful with the hopes that non-Christians will come to the Sunday morning worship service and meet the Lord. I believe that the church is ready to move from maintenance into mission.

The town of Bourne, at the entrance to Cape Cod, has a population of around 20,000 people. Of the total population of Bourne 97% are white with a median household income of \$92,200 according to the 2010 US census.³⁶ A notable characteristic of Bourne that makes it unique among Cape Cod towns is the fact that the Cape Cod Canal goes through the middle of the town essentially splitting it in half. The two bridges that connect the two halves of Bourne were built in 1933; they are inadequate to the amount of traffic that they bear every day. Crossing one of the Cape Cod Canal bridges poses a major barrier for many who live on Cape Cod. Another unique fact for Bourne is the existence of a large military base in the middle of the town, thus effectively splitting the town into eastern and western sections. As evidence of the days before automobiles Bourne has seven separate villages. Thus, Bourne is a bedroom community split north and south by a canal, east to west by a military base, with seven villages and no functional town center. People from our church live in almost all the villages in Bourne, as well as in Falmouth and Sandwich.

Our church is similar to many of the evangelical churches on Cape Cod both in size and demographics. It is my hope that my research, to help prepare and implement a move from a traditional paradigm of church ministry to a missional paradigm of church

36. "QuickFacts: Barnstable County, Massachusetts; Barnstable Town city, Massachusetts; UNITED STATES," Accessed March 15, 2019.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bournetownbarnstablecountymassachusetts,US/PST045217>.

ministry, applied within my church context, will be helpful for other pastors serving Cape Cod churches.

Thesis Overview

I will defend my thesis by developing a theological and biblical framework for the theology of personal and corporate renewal, discipleship, and mission. I will discuss the biblical foundation for spiritual formation and character development as a basis for expressing the life of Christ in the disciple. Since the church is God's family on mission, I will develop a theology of the community of God rooted in a clear understanding of the Kingdom of God as a present, yet not fully realized reality. In developing the theology of mission, I will show that the scope and missionary call of God to his church to join him in his work is rooted in the Great Commission given by Jesus.

In chapter three I will discuss the literature that is pivotal to our understanding of church renewal, discipleship, spiritual formation, and missional living. There has been an explosion of literature published in the past decade, so I will seek to dialogue with the authors who have made significant contributions to the current discussion. Since the health of an organism is dependent on the health of the units comprising it and the health of the environment surrounding it, I will bring authors dealing with the subject of church health into the conversation. Healthy disciples make healthy churches.

In chapter four I will discuss my research project design. My project involves structured interviews with pastors who have led or are leading their congregations through the process of renewal to embrace God's mission. My project includes three stages. The first

stage is to develop a set of interview questions. These questions will be designed to gather information of the ministry context, the story of renewal and the key principles that helped move the church community toward mission. The second stage will be conducting the interviews with four pastors. In the third stage of the project, I will compile and analyze the results of the interviews and develop a strategic plan. This is the plan that I will share with my church Leadership Team for feedback.

In chapter five I will summarize the results of the interviews and develop a strategic pathway for transitioning the church I lead from maintenance to mission. Specifically, I will present a process for developing a discipleship culture (a culture where making disciples who make disciples is a way of life), a strategy for the church to identify and embrace God's mission for them, and finally to develop a vision for multiplying missional communities throughout the villages of Bourne

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHURCH RENEWAL

Introduction

A reoccurring theme in the Bible is one of renewal. Ever since the Garden of Eden, God has been working to renew a relationship with humanity. This is God's plan of redemption in Christ where He is in the process of making all things new. As Christians, we know that our new life in Christ is the result of God's reconciling work of the cross, forgiving sins through Christ's sacrificial death, and making all things new (2 Cor 5:17-19). In the Old Testament, the history of Israel as a nation chosen by God shows the thread of God's redemptive purposes. When Israel is rebellious to their national covenant with God, over and over again God renews his covenant with Israel, promising a day when a new and everlasting covenant will be established through the Messiah. One day, even the created order will experience renewal (Rom 8:19-22).

Since it is God's desire to bring renewal to His people, what would be the theological and Biblical foundations for leading a church into a renewal of their call to participate in the mission of God? In this chapter, I would like to establish a biblical and theological framework for helping churches caught in a maintenance mode to move toward becoming a healthy, mission-focused, biblically obedient church.

I have been told that it is easier to give birth to a new church than to raise the dead in an older congregation who have lost the vision for true discipleship. This may be true, but just as a Saul can become an Apostle Paul when confronted with the revelation of who Jesus is, I believe that any group of people who truly desire to be used by God in

a Kingdom mission, and who are willing to align themselves with the values and practices of God's way of life, can become an effective community of followers of Jesus. Yes, God can raise the dead to new life, and in the resurrection, God gains more glory.

Let's begin by defining the terms maintenance and mission. One would be wrong to assume that maintenance is to be abandoned if mission is to be engaged. Every organism or organization must have a system in place to maintain its life or it will die. However, many existing churches struggle with the balance between maintenance and mission. When the desire to maintain what they already have becomes central to the life of the church, then mission is relegated to a committee or a special offering to help those specially trained for the mission.¹ Churches in a maintenance mode can be of any size, and they will tend to be more focused on a pastoral model of ministry, where caring for church members are the sole focus of the pastoral staff. Smaller churches can be in a survival mode where they desire to 'keep the doors open' for as long as possible. Mission, on the other hand, focuses on reaching beyond the walls of the church, seeking to be 'salt and light' (Matt 5:13-16) in the community and bringing the influence of God's kingdom rule. Alan Hirsch, in *The Forgotten Ways*, summarizes the tension between mission and maintenance as follows:

The fact that the Christendom paradigm has presided over the last seventeen centuries in the West provides us with a substantial basis with which to test its success or failure. As we stand here at the roots of the 21st century, we believe that we must, at long last, give up trying to rejig the paradigm to suit the massively changed missional contexts of the Western church. It simply has not worked. In fact, in the increasingly complex situations we now find ourselves, it has likely created more problems than it has solved. The church is in decline in almost every

1. Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2001), 106-108.

context in the First World. In this situation, naïve applications of traditionalist paradigms create problems . . . they don't resolve them."²

Viewing church planting as a missionary endeavor requires the same level of encounter with the surrounding culture and the same diligence in developing appropriate forms and structures as those in areas considered to be the 'mission field'. The same challenge exists when replanting a biblical vision for engaging in God's mission in an existing church. Obviously, moving a church community from maintenance to mission requires solid biblical teaching along with faith and the work of the Holy Spirit, challenging the reigning paradigms of disobedience and unbelief, and implanting a new paradigm of faith and obedience to God's call. In short, it will require the church body to embrace a new theological perspective. In seminary I learned that the Apostle Paul was a task theologian, meaning that his theology was practical. In the same way, my theological perspective in this paper will be intensely practical.

Stuart Murray in his book, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*, writes that all church planters and church leaders, in general, operate from a theological framework, which is more often assumed rather than clearly written.³ A clearly articulated theological framework will help to inform the strategy and practice of church planting or replanting. In the typical western church, the framework begins with an ecclesiology that determines its Christology, which in turn, determines its missiology. In other words, we tend to understand Jesus through our church traditions, which also determine our understanding of God's mission for us. In this framework, the particular denominational

2. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2013), 27-28.

3. Murray, *Church Planting*, 39.

ecclesiology, or the form of worship and governance determines the scope and goal of the mission. Thus, church planting can devolve into market branding and seeking to gain a market share for your style of Christianity. When mission derives its meaning from ecclesiology, then structures and traditions can become theological absolutes and deviation from them can be considered heresy. A more biblical framework that allows us to model our purpose, methodology, and mission after the person and work of Jesus begins with a Christology that determines our missiology that then determines our ecclesiology.⁴ In this framework, our sense of purpose in the world (mission) is informed by our understanding of the person and work of Jesus, rather than a particular denominational view of mission. Likewise, our mission to the world will inform how we function and structure ourselves as a church community to best fulfill that mission.

When we start with the person of Christ and our obedience to His Lordship, it enables us to see more clearly the mission of God. As we make disciples the church community is gathered out of the harvest for the mission. As Michael Breen states, “If you make disciples, you always get the church, but if you make a church, you rarely get disciples.”⁵ He also writes, “Effective discipleship builds the church, not the other way around. We need to understand the church as the *effect* of discipleship and not the *cause*. If you set out to build the church, there is no guarantee you will make disciples. It is far more likely that you will create consumers who depend on the spiritual services

4. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 143.

5. Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Pawleys Island: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011), Kindle. Chapter 1.

that religious professionals provide.”⁶ Mike Breen affirms the fact that if one seeks to build the organization or institution of the church without regard to forming believers into the image of Christ, one will not produce the kind of disciples Jesus envisioned.

When Jesus established his church upon the rock of Peter's confession of the Lordship of Christ (Matt 16:18), he was establishing a community of disciples. The call to discipleship (following Jesus) is both an individual and corporate reality. Focusing on corporate over the individual aspect of church life creates an imbalance. With the influence of western church culture, the emphasis has been more on the corporate or institutional life of the church over the need to develop radical followers of Christ in a holistic way. Breen's call to organic discipleship is seeking to restore the necessary balance to church life.

With this in mind, this chapter will look more closely at three theological concepts that are pertinent to moving a church toward mission. They are a biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God, a redefinition of the nature and purpose of the church, and a clear awareness of God's mission on the earth.

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching and ministry. His ministry begins with an announcement that the Kingdom of God has come near and calling people to repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15). The expression of the Kingdom of God is seen throughout all of scripture, appearing frequently throughout the

6. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 1.

Gospels, more infrequently in the rest of the New Testament, and implied, but not explicitly referenced in the Old Testament.

The concept and expression of the Kingdom of God permeate all of Jesus' teachings. In Matt 13 Jesus teaches from a series of parables that define what the Kingdom of God is like. This Kingdom is like a sower who sowed seed on different kinds of soils. Only the fertile, prepared soil produces fruit just as only the heart open to knowing God can receive the seed of the Kingdom. This Kingdom is worth a great price so much so that one would sell all in order to purchase it (Matt 13:44-45). This Kingdom can only be laid hold of through intentional effort (Matt 11:12). Jesus taught that his disciples should seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness (Matt 6:33) and that this Kingdom should be the first priority in life. One day the Pharisees confronted Jesus about his authority to drive out demons, accusing him of using Satan's power to do so. Jesus responded by saying, "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28 NIV). Clearly, Jesus understood the kingdom of God to be a new order, the age to come, where evil and demonic power will not be permitted to stand. Jesus, in exercising his power over demonic forces, clearly demonstrates that the reality of God's Kingdom, i.e., the age to come, has invaded our fallen world. Matt 12:29 sheds more light on the conflict between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?" (Matt 12:29 NIV) The strong man is Satan and his house is this present evil age. Jesus is pointing to

the presence of the kingdom of God in the binding of the strong man and casting out demons.

Jesus even promised his disciples a place in the kingdom to come (John 14:3, Luke 22:18). This kingdom is not only a future reality but also a present reality that Jesus' disciples are instructed to pray for. In the 'Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13) Jesus' disciples are instructed to pray that God's kingdom would come as a present reality.

One evening Nicodemus sought Jesus out with questions regarding the kingdom of God. The conversation recorded in John 3:3 reveals the need to see and enter into the kingdom of God. One must be born again, that is born of the Holy Spirit from above, to see the kingdom of God and enter into it. Nicodemus was looking for means to obtain eternal life and Jesus points him toward the kingdom of God. Clearly, Nicodemus understood the reference to God's kingdom.

After Jesus' resurrection, he spent forty days walking with the disciples and teaching them about the kingdom of God. It was not surprising that throughout the book of Acts we find the apostles proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom as a present reality. As the Apostle Paul was concluding his first missionary journey, he encouraged the new disciples to remain true to the faith by saying, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22 NIV).

The concept of the kingdom of God was not new to Jesus and his followers because they were steeped in the teachings of the Old Testament. Early in the history of Israel God identified himself as the sovereign over all the earth. The exodus from Egypt, the desert wanderings and the conquering of the Promised Land established Yahweh as

more than a parochial god of one nation, but as the Sovereign Lord of all the earth. The Psalms declare God to be the ruler of all the earth in multiple places (Pss 24:1; 47:1-4; 68:1-3; 93:1-2; 97:1; 149:2).

For Israel, the concept of the kingdom of God was seen very clearly in the proclamations of the prophets. In Isa 2:2-3 Isaiah presents a vision of the mountain of the Lord's temple being established as a place for all the nations to gather and be taught by the Lord. Later in Isa 9:6-7, Isaiah prophesies the coming Messiah as the divine son to be given for the world, and a son on whose shoulders the government of God (or kingdom) will rest. The Messiah's government (kingdom) and peace will continue to grow forever, and he will reign on David's throne (Isa 9:6-7). This prophecy points to the coming of Jesus as the Son of God given to humanity. When God established David as king over Israel, he made a promise to David that one from his lineage would sit on the throne forever. All of Israel understood this to be a promised Messiah King who would deliver Israel from her enemies. John Bright in his book *The Kingdom of God* writes:

To acclaim, anyone as Messiah is to announce in him the coming of the Kingdom of God, for it is precisely the business of the Messiah to establish the Kingdom. Messiah cannot be separated from the Kingdom. To be sure, both Old Testament faith and that of Judaism frequently depicted the triumphant Kingdom with no mention of the Messiah, but the Messiah was never himself thought of apart from that Kingdom: when Messiah comes, the Kingdom comes. A Messiah who had come to set up no Kingdom would have been an anomaly indeed.⁷

From this cursory view of the Old Testament, one would conclude, that first century Jews understood the concept of the kingdom of God in terms of a Messiah who

7. John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), 215-216.

would set up the kingdom of God. However, Jesus' view of the kingdom of God was markedly different than the popular view of his day. When asked by Pilate if he was the king of the Jews, Jesus did not deny it but said that his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36).

There have been many different perspectives of the Kingdom of God put forth through a variety of theological camps. Some want to relegate the Kingdom of God to be only a future Kingdom established when Jesus returns, while others tend to focus on the Kingdom being fully present and operational now. George Eldon Ladd gives the best perspective to us in his short book *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.⁸ He teaches that the Kingdom of God is both "already but not yet", that it is already present now in part, but not yet fully manifested until Jesus' return. The Bible teaches that there are two ages: this present age ruled by Satan (Eph 2:1-2, 2 Cor 4:3-4), and the age to come (Matt 12:32). The presence of God's kingdom is, in reality, the power and order of the age to come breaking into the present age, giving humanity a taste of the age to come.

Now, if the Kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teachings and the life of the early church, and if it is indeed present now, then we do well to pay attention to it. According to Murray, church planters, and by extension pastors, rarely embrace this perspective of the Kingdom of God.⁹ If a Kingdom perspective is to be integrated into church planting, we need to be clear about the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God.

8. George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959). Ladd's treatment of the Kingdom of God is both unparalleled and classic.

9. Murray, *Church Planting*, 46.

The best place to begin is by defining the Kingdom of God. "The primary meaning of both the Hebrew word *malkuth* in the Old Testament and of the Greek word *basileia* in the New Testament is the rank, authority, and sovereignty exercised by a king."¹⁰ Thus the Kingdom of God is His kingly reign, His rule, and His authority or His sovereignty over all He has created. Ladd goes on to state "a reign without a realm in which it is exercised is meaningless. Thus, we find that the Kingdom of God is also the realm in which God's reign may be experienced."¹¹ The prayer Jesus taught his disciples contains a petition for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth the same way it is expressed in heaven. Those who pray this are seeking the blessings of God's sovereign rule.

Whenever God's rule or will are opposed we see the operation of another, different kingdom. Satan usurped the authority of the triune God and sought to establish his own kingdom. Jesus' birth into our world, his incarnation, and his work through the cross is, in reality, a beachhead of God's kingdom in hostile territory in order to reclaim what had been stolen. Every church becomes an outpost for the Kingdom of God in hostile territory, seeking to restore humanity back into right relationship with God and becoming rightly aligned with His kingdom rule. Opposition and conflict directed at church planting efforts can often be traced back to the conflict of two warring kingdoms.

God's Kingdom and the church should not be seen as the same thing. Murray gives three marks of distinction between the Kingdom and the church. He identifies the

10. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 19.

11. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 22.

church as a community and the kingdom as an activity; secondly, the kingdom is broader in scope than the church, and finally, the kingdom rather than the church defines the scope of God's mission.¹² Churches function more as the agents or ambassadors of the Kingdom, representing the kingdom in neighborhoods, workplaces, and in every aspect of life. The outworking of God's sovereign rule (His kingdom) can often be seen beyond the work of a particular church. A church planter does well to recognize where God is sovereignly working in a particular area and to join Him in His work. When a kingdom perspective defines the church's mission, mission expands to include issues of justice, compassion for the poor, concern for the environment, and holistic discipleship. If the church defines its mission in an institutional setting, then mission can be reduced to membership drives, soul winning, or calls to belief without any significant behavioral change initiated by repentance. "Church planting divorced from the values and goals of the Kingdom may actually hinder the coming of the kingdom: if it unwittingly reinforces the individualism that destroys communities; if it legitimizes the privatized notion of religion that emasculates the gospel and produces ghetto-churches; and if it engages in evangelism without prophecy."¹³

The heart of God's Kingdom is love – the essence of God's nature.¹⁴ Coming under God's rule begins with being restored to right relationship with God through Christ. In Christ, we experience the wonderful love and grace of God, who forgives our sins and receives us as sons and daughters. Receiving the gift of salvation results in a

12. Murray, *Church Planting*, 47-50.

13. Murray, *Church Planting*, 51.

14. 1 John 4:7-21. The Epistle of 1 John speaks of God's love not only as an action towards us but also as the very nature of who God is.

new spiritual birth by the Holy Spirit and entrance into a new way of life, a new Kingdom order (John 3:3). All life is encoded in DNA, the molecule that makes us who we are physically. It is found in every cell of our body. So it is with the Body of Christ; each member has the DNA of the Kingdom within him or her. The DNA of God's kingdom is summed up in three statements of Jesus articulated in the great commandments and the great commission. This 'Irreducible Core'¹⁵ of Christianity is simply to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, to love your neighbor as yourself, and to invest your life in making disciples of Jesus. The Irreducible Core is the way of life Jesus taught his disciples and the heart of the Kingdom seen on the earth. Living under God's Kingdom rule means that we are loved and accepted by the Father through Jesus and thus can respond by loving God in all we do (worship), loving others as ourselves (service), and making disciples by inviting them into a new way of life in the Kingdom (reproducing the life of Christ in others). This represents the desire of God for every church seeking to express the dynamics of life in the Kingdom of God. In church renewal, it is vital to infuse the DNA of God's kingdom into the life of every disciple.

The DNA of God's kingdom is discovered as disciples experience the presence of God in corporate worship and see the outworking of God's love in relationships. Learning to love God with self-abandon is a life-long process enabling us to discover the grace and mercy of God. Discipleship is the means for implanting the DNA of the kingdom into individual lives. It is best imparted through spiritual formation using the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, scripture reading and service.

15. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 30.

God's Kingdom also has a message for the world – the Gospel, a message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-21). Church planting and redevelopment both are processes that are gospel-centered. As ambassadors of the King, we are charged to carry the message of the King to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' day when a king wanted to make a proclamation, he would send out heralds with a message, an *euangelion*, to announce throughout the kingdom.¹⁶ In the same way, the King Eternal has given us an *euangelion* that Jesus, the incarnation of God, has come on our behalf to defeat Satan, sin, and death, and to restore our relationship with God the Father. New churches must be built on the foundation of this gospel (Matt 16:16) or they eventually will become man-centered social clubs. "The call to the Kingdom is a revolutionary call to radical obedience through radical surrender of our hearts to His heart. That surrender, the *metanoia*¹⁷ Jesus speaks of, must be played out through all of life, a life permeated by the Kingdom, expressing the Kingdom, extending the Kingdom, displayed as a witness to the transforming love and power of King Jesus."¹⁸

Discipleship, the main task of the church, is also to be kingdom centered. Becoming a follower of Jesus is more than learning a new system of belief or faithfully attending meetings; it is learning to live in a new way with Jesus at the center. Our life has come under new management; a new kingdom has replaced the kingdom of darkness or self. Discipleship is learning to abide in Christ and live in community with other followers of Christ.

16. Euangelion is the Greek word for the message of good news, or gospel, and where we get our term evangelism.

17. *Metanoia* is a Greek word that means repentance or change of heart or mind.

18. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation* (Manchester: PraxisMedia, 2009), 50.

In summary, God's kingdom is a new realm and a new way of life centered on the reign of Jesus, which is established by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. People are invited to enter into this kingdom through surrender to the Lord Jesus and becoming his disciple. Let's consider the implications of this new reality.

Implications of a Biblical Understanding of God's Kingdom

(1) Since God's Kingdom is the most decentralized government on the planet with His authority invested in each individual believer, then church leaders, especially pastors, should seek to develop people and empower them to serve God. Leaders are more effective when they seek to influence others by personal example rather than wield power by forcing their opinions on those they lead (Matt 20:25-28; 1 Pet 5:2-4).

(2) Devotion to Jesus is seen through obedience to him. (3) We do not minister for God; rather, we seek to join with God's sovereign work already underway in our community.

(4) God's kingdom advances through the reproduction of disciples.

Re-Imagining Church

The second area to consider in helping a church move toward mission involves biblically defining the nature and purpose of the church. Church revitalization must address the congregation's current understanding of the church to be sure that their understanding is in proper alignment with what the Bible teaches. To many in our

culture, church has devolved into meaning a building where religious activities take place, or a worship service, or even a benevolent institution that does good things for people in need. Howard Snyder categorizes some common misrepresentations of churches. He writes,

Many see the church as a 'lecture hall' where believers go to hear the Bible expounded. For others, church is a theater where the faithful assemble to witness the drama of the sacrament enacted before them. Again, the church may be seen as a corporation, efficient and highly program oriented with a full-time pastor team involved in retailing religion to the masses. Finally . . . many see the church as a social club . . .¹⁹

He goes on to define the church as "a radically biblical, caring community of believers totally sold out to Jesus Christ."²⁰ In the *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, the authors follow the cultural development of the church in America historically. The reformation continued the understanding of the church as a "place of worship", and "as the place where a Christianized civilization gathers for worship, and the place where the Christian character of the society is cultivated."²¹ This understanding of church conceals its true, biblical definition as a body of people sent by God on a mission.

What did Jesus have in mind when he established His church? He only used the Greek word, *ekklesia*, twice in the gospels, in Matt 16:18, defining it as a vehicle of dominion over the forces of evil, and Matt 18:17, in reference to the church body being His court of final appeal in conflict resolution in the covenant community. It is interesting that Jesus chose a secular government term that was well known in the

19. Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 36.

20. Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 41.

21. Guder, *Missional Church*, 79-80.

Mediterranean world of his day. “The word *ekklesia* is derived from two Greek words, *ek*, “out,” and *kaleo*, “call”; hence the church is composed of “called out” people.²² This word referred to the form of government used in Greek city-states. The citizens of the city-state would be called out of their normal daily activities to a ruling council in order to make governmental decisions affecting life in their community. Consequently, the Church is not only a worshipping community but also a governing community extending the authority of King Jesus, nullifying the powers of hell and restoring the order of the Kingdom of God. This *ekklesia* is founded upon the revelation of Jesus as Lord, the Son of God. The salient points we can glean from these scriptures are that the church is to function as a community, to function in the authority of God, and to represent the nature of God’s Kingdom to the society around it.

We can see the values of the *ekklesia* demonstrated in the lives of the early disciples in Acts 2:42-28. Though this passage is more descriptive than prescriptive, we readily see the values lived out as the church community devoted itself to God’s Word, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, hospitality, worship, and just being together. The outcomes were miracles, growth, the favor of God, and joy. An organic unity characterized the church community as the early disciples related to one another as a family. What a welcome change it would be if we viewed church today as our family in Christ. You do not leave your family over disagreements, but you attempt to resolve them. Church shopping would then be the equivalent of children shopping for a new

22. J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 17.

family. The values articulated by the church planter are critically important and should be aligned with Jesus' kingdom values.

The church is not just a community; it is called to be an incarnational community. The incarnation of Jesus (literally, God taking on flesh) is the means Jesus used to engage in mission. Jesus reveals the character and nature of God completely. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3 NIV). The Greek word for representation is *χαρακτηρ* where we get our word for character. It literally means to engrave or to make an impression as in stamping a coin and refers to the "One on whom God has stamped or imprinted his being".²³ The incarnation of Christ means that God revealed himself in flesh and blood. Jesus doesn't simply represent God the Father's values or character, but is in very substance God, the ultimate image of God revealed. He said that if you have seen him you have seen the Father (John 14:6). John writes in 1 John 1:1 (NIV), that "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." The incarnation means Jesus was personally and physically present on earth, and through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, with us. During his ministry years, sinners actually liked to hang out with Jesus. He was approachable, and he cared about their lives. The incarnation of Jesus meant that he entered into the life of a particular community as a Jewish male, speaking the language of his people, living out the customs and practices of his day. To be the church that Jesus imagined, the church community must take the

23. Colin Brown, ed., *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Vol 2* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 288-289.

principle of incarnation seriously. The church is called to be an incarnational community of Jesus who willingly share their lives with the people they seek to reach with the gospel. This saying is true: People don't care what you know until they know that you care.

Stuart Murray listed incarnation as one of his key theological principles.²⁴

Incarnation is the posture of God's people to those who stand outside of the faith.

When God speaks to people, he usually does so by making his Word flesh. The Good

News of the Kingdom is mediated through the lives of believers to family and friends.

The Gospel is shared most effectively along relational avenues. Contextualization of the

gospel message, that is, sharing the gospel in a way relevant for the cultural context, is

critical for communicating in a manner that can be heard and received.

A theological tension that many churches wrestle with is how to be 'in the world'

without being 'of the world' (John 17:14-16). Incarnational ministry by its definition

means to engage with those in our culture who are caught in sin. But the church is

called to be holy, to be distinct and different from the world around them. To associate

with the sinners in the community would compromise holiness so it is reasoned.

Unfortunately, there are churches that so identify with the world they lose their

distinctiveness as a holy community. Likewise, there are churches that withdraw from

ministry to certain areas of sin in order to preserve their holiness.²⁵ For a church to

recapture the mission of God it must wrestle with being incarnational in a sinful world.

24. Murray, *Church Planting*, 42-46.

25. Theologically liberal churches are examples of the former. Ultra-conservative churches would be examples of those withdrawing from society.

As Murray observes, “unless there are ways in which a church is ‘not of the world’, there is nothing to proclaim or incarnate; unless the church is in some ways “in the world”, proclamation and incarnation cannot take place.”²⁶ For the gospel message to be communicated to those who need to hear the good news in a manner they can receive someone must go and be the presence of Jesus in their midst.

Tim Keller wrestles with this tension in his ministry to the people of New York City. In *Center Church*, Keller develops the idea of ‘Theological Vision’, which is the connection between the doctrine of the church and its ministry expression.²⁷ The truths of scripture never change; doctrine is timeless, rooted in the unchanging nature and purposes of God. However, how a church community relates the timeless truths of God's Word to the culture they are seeking to influence flows through the prism of their theological vision. The philosophy of ministry or ministry DNA of a particular church, denomination or movement will determine how they engage the local culture, their worship expressions, church governance and discipleship, and outreach processes. Developing a theological vision (philosophy of ministry) is critical to becoming a distinctive community of God's people that will not be swayed by the world, and yet able to faithfully restate the gospel in their cultural context.

One of the main problems in our understanding of church today is our inherited context of Christendom. Christendom is a framework for understanding the role of the Church in culture born out of Emperor Constantine’s Edict of Milan where he, with the stroke of a pen, moved the Church from the outskirts of culture to the very center of

26. Murray, *Church Planting*, 45.

27. Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

culture. As western culture became Christianized the mission of the church was replaced with the maintenance of the church. Western culture assumed the Modernity worldview that arose out of the Enlightenment and championed the values of rationality and reason, the autonomous self, and the idea of individual rights and freedoms.²⁸ The Church is going through an identity crisis as our culture moves from modernity into postmodernity. No longer is the Church the center of culture enjoying the privileges of a dominant Christian cultural context. This is challenging the western church to move away from simply maintaining what they have always enjoyed to becoming missionaries sent by the Sovereign Lord into the harvest field.

Jesus, when he ascended, gave a mission to his church. The church's main function is to make disciples, developing devoted followers of Jesus. Or as Bill Hybels states, the task of the church is to "turn atheists into missionaries."²⁹ In Matt 16:17-19, Jesus laid the foundation for his church, a community of disciples living under the reign of Christ with the authority to overcome the authority (gates) of hell. In Matt 28:18-20, Jesus commissions his church to go and make disciples out of every nation, building on the foundation of Christ's Lordship. The church's mission of making disciples involves connecting lost people in relationship with a holy, loving God, training disciples in godly character, restoring healthy relationships in family and community life, and equipping the church by discerning and releasing the gifts of the Spirit to edify or build up the Body of Christ. Disciple making is the means by which Christ builds his church under the

28. Guder, *Missional Church*, Chapter 3 contains an insightful analysis of the roots of our national and church culture.

29. Lynne and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 168.

direction of the Holy Spirit. Church leaders are to be faithful stewards of Christ's flock, caring and developing God's people to fulfill God's purposes in the world.

For the past few centuries, the accepted model for discipleship in the church has been classroom instruction. The influence of Greek thinking has had a profound influence on western culture. These ideas have been imported into the church. Greek dualism separated intellectual truth from practical living. The consequence of Greek dualism is a church discipleship strategy that emphasizes instruction or teaching of truth divorced from applying the truth to daily living. Biblical discipleship, which is the church's commission, involves incarnating the truth of the scriptures into the life of the disciple of Jesus. In discipleship, the goal is to change old ways of thinking and behavior in a person or a church body. Using a Greek approach to discipleship would begin with providing information through books and classroom teachings in the hope that the person would change their thinking resulting in a change in behavior. Addressing only the intellectual aspects of the person often fails to change their behavior and gives them a false sense of obedience to the Lord. Right thinking is not obedient action. The result is a church full of people who know what is right, but whose behavior betrays their allegiance. In this approach, truth is a concept to be learned academically.³⁰

The Apostle James writes, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (Jas 1:22 NIV). To only hear God's word without obeying what it says was foreign to the Hebrew mind. As James goes on to say, it is "like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and

30. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 122-123.

immediately forgets what he looks like” (Jas 1:23-24 NIV). The biblical definition of wisdom is truth applied to one’s life.

Jesus method of discipleship is incarnational and transformational. In the Hebraic understanding truth is not a concept but a person. As a Rabbi, Jesus imparted truth to his disciples through his teachings and obedient lifestyle. They learned by observing and imitating Jesus as their role model. Life was not compartmentalized into the spiritual and the physical, the mind, and behavior. The person's life was seen as an organic whole. Jesus’ parable of the two sons illustrates this point. Which son was the obedient one – the one who promised to obey, or the one who actually did the work?³¹ Jesus’ approach is apprenticeship – acting our way into a new way of thinking. The classroom approach is not wrong if it is combined with a context to practice what was taught. Jesus modeled this when He sent the disciples out two by two to practice how they had seen Jesus minister. Truth learned intellectually is powerless to transform behavior unless there is an opportunity to practice it in real life situations. Imagine a surgeon who had learned the techniques of surgery in the classroom but never practiced under supervision in the operating room. In church renewal discipleship models need to be reexamined and brought into alignment with Jesus methods.

31. Matt 21:28-31.

Implications of a Biblical Understanding of Church Re-missioning

In a Christendom model, the church focused on maintaining its status as an institution. Increasing attendance in worship services has long been a measuring stick of success. Evangelism is seen as inviting people to a church event so that they can come to Christ. The 'come and see' or attractional approach has had a degree of success but has not been able to disciple people into a missional lifestyle. The attractional methodology is a huge roadblock to the disciple-making focus, as the goal is attendance, not discipleship. The church of the 21st century will of necessity focus more on being missionaries to the culture than maintainers of it. The 'go and be' incarnational ministry needed to move a church from a pastoral care mode to a model of "taking the church to the people rather than bringing people to the church"³² will take precedence.

Establishing the church as a community, a family of God, giving priority to relationships over roles will help to restore true koinonia (fellowship). The biblical understanding of fellowship is more than a coffee hour after a meeting. It literally means a shared life or relationship with a reason. The church as a community does not exist for its own interests, but rather for the mission of God. Realizing that Christianity is a team sport will come as a new revelation to many in the church today. The pastor leading a church in the renewal of mission should take every opportunity to instill the values of inclusiveness, servanthood, preferring one another, and loving confrontation in order to grow in Christ-likeness. Authenticity will be the mark of such a church. The picture of the church in the New Testament shows us a community of believers who live

32. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 135.

out the message of the Cross. Self-sacrifice is the opposite of our culture's love affair with consumerism. How would the world view a church as a group of people representing the reign of God, who followed Jesus by denying themselves, taking up the cross and blessing their town or city? The mission of God would be seen in a positive light.

When the church is functioning as God intended, the Kingdom of God is seen by the world. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay identify three primary spheres for the church to become an incarnational community where God's presence can become real to those not yet in Christ.³³ These spheres are community, enjoying life together with Christ at the center; communion, a corporate relationship with God nourished through spiritual formation, worship and prayer; and mission, which is responding to God's invitation to participate in his work of redemption to the whole world. They believe that at the intersection of these three spheres the Kingdom of God is made tangible. "We believe that unless people experience all three elements together and fight for this Tangible Kingdom, they won't grow as disciples of Christ, and Sojourners (non-Christians) won't be moving towards God."³⁴

Mission of God

Building on a clear understanding of the reign or government of the Sovereign God and a biblical definition of church, we developed the theme of *Missio Dei* or the

33. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2008), 148-149.

34. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 149.

mission of God. Any church community desiring to move from maintenance toward mission needs to move their focus from themselves to the purposes of God.

The mission of God is portrayed throughout scripture. It is seen in Jonah's call to preach in Nineveh where God redeems a nation willing to turn toward him. It is seen in the parable of the lost sheep where the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine and searches for the one lost and in trouble. It is seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan who loves his neighbor even at personal cost to himself. God's mission is living out our identity as people redeemed by Christ. We are bought with the price of Christ's death on the cross and so we are not our own (1 Cor 6:19, 20).

The overemphasis on pastoral care where the pastor becomes the chaplain of the church resists the whole idea of the church called to be on mission with God. In our current church culture, people go to church in order to be 'fed' or ministered unto. Mission is reserved for those who are trained, gifted, or has a lot of time on their hands, but certainly not for the average Christian.

Throughout the Bible, we see evidence of God tenderly caring for his people. Believers are encouraged to cast their cares on God for He cares for them (1 Pet 5:7). Yet some churches overemphasize the blessings of God to make it the central aspect of the church's relationship with God. Seeking the blessings of God becomes the primary motivation of the Christian life rather than serving God. In contrast, God called Abraham to follow Him with the promise of blessings so that through Abraham all the peoples of the world would be blessed. The triune God has a mission in the world, and He has called His church to participate in that quest. "The introverted question, 'Does God's

church have a mission?’ needs to be stood on its head: ‘Does God’s mission have a church?’³⁵ This is an important distinction. Does the church exist apart from God’s mission, or does it exist precisely to fulfill God’s mission? And it should be noted that God’s mission is to reconcile and alienated humanity back into the relationship God. This first means that we are created to worship God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Pastoral care is a vital part of the mission of God. Any athlete knows that he or she must take time for their body to recover from a physical competition. The same is true for the body of Christ. As followers of Christ engage the mission of God and the spiritual warfare associated with reaching lost people, there is a need for caring for their physical and spiritual needs. Soul care and spiritual formation are a key component of disciple-making. Pastoral care is also a tool in missional outreach when opportunities arise to meet the needs of neighbors going through a crisis. Pastoral care must be seen in the light of God’s mission, as the pit crew’s role in preparing the racing car for the race.

In the Christendom church model mission has been defined as financially supporting those who are sent to bring Christ to other nations. Though this is an admirable endeavor, it reduces participation in the mission of God to a few, highly motivated and trained people. The mission of God is at the heart of what it means to be the church. Some would argue that the primary purpose of the church is worship, and I would agree. Worship that declares the majesty of God is at the center of mission. The

35. Steve Chalke and Anthony Watkins, *Intelligent Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 76.

church's vertical relationship or communion with God is the source of life. The ultimate purpose of mission is reproducing worshippers delighting in God's love and seeking to please him with their lives. Consider the worship experience Isaiah encountered in Isa chapter 6. The awesome worship around God's throne produced repentance in Isaiah and a call to participate in God's mission. The Greek word for missionary, *Apostolos*, means 'sent ones'. Sending anyone on an errand technically makes him or her a missionary. From this perspective we can conclude the God by his very nature is missional. Since the sin of Adam and Eve broke humanity's fellowship with God, God has been sending messengers and servants to call people back to himself. The Father sent the Son into our world with a mission, and the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to indwell the church. Participating in God's mission is pivotal to knowing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The mission of God is seen as a thread that runs throughout the Bible. Starting in Gen 3:15 following Adam and Eve's fall from grace, God promised redemption when He declared, "And I will put enmity between you (serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15 NIV). God's mission in the world is to rescue fallen humanity, and He will accomplish this through the seed of the woman. Later, God calls Abraham to join him on His mission with the promise that through Abraham's offspring the world would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). Out of Abraham God calls a nation to be his chosen people through whom the Messiah, the seed of the woman who crushes the serpent, will come. Jesus is the Son of God sent to the earth to be the redeemer. Jesus invited his disciples to join him on His

mission, and on his ascension gave them a commission to disciple people out of every nation (Matt 28:18-20). We, as the church of Jesus, are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9-10 NIV).

The church, filled with the Holy Spirit, is called to participate with the mission of God. The question remains, what is that mission? First of all, the mission is not church planting. Planting new authentic Christian communities is a means to completing the mission but not the mission itself. Jesus' mission defines our mission. The Father sent the Son to seek and save those who were lost, hurt and bound, restoring them into an intimate relationship with God. Paul summarizes God's missional purpose in 2 Cor 5:18-21 when he reminds us that we are called to be Christ's ambassadors, and we have been given a word and ministry of reconciliation. Jesus came to purchase our redemption on the cross. His mission was to redeem a family of sons and daughters, and ultimately to reconcile all things to the Father. The mission for the church is an invitation to join in God's family business following the example of Jesus (Luke 2:49).

In John 20:21 the resurrected Jesus met with the frightened disciples as they hid from the Jewish authorities. He spoke words of mission saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21 NIV) How did the Father send Jesus? "The Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14 NIV). "For Jesus, incarnation meant that he was a male, first-century Jew, immersed in the culture and customs of his day, speaking the language of his contemporaries. But it meant also that he was distinctive, that he challenged social norms and gender stereotypes, that he asked awkward

questions, that he taught and modeled different values.”³⁶ Likewise, we are to be incarnational as the posture of our mission. We are called to live among those we are seeking to influence with the gospel. Jesus’ last words to his disciples before his ascension reinforced this missional call. Matt 28:18-20 contains the Great Commission (co-mission) for the church, which is to make disciples as believers go about their daily lives. Our mission is to influence and invite others to follow Jesus allowing his love to transform them and by teaching them to obey all the He has commanded. Our mission is not to remove new disciples from their family, friends, or social context, but to enable and empower them to incarnate the values of the Kingdom.

The term ‘missional’ is becoming popular in Christian circles. Missional seeks to separate the notion of mission defined as activities we choose to do, from mission as a lifestyle. Many small groups are seeking to focus outward by serving others whether through feeding the poor, tutoring at-risk children, etc. This is a good thing and a blessing to those in need, but benevolent activity does not mean one is missional. Viewing mission as a lifestyle means that one will look at every area of life as a place where God is working. When members of our churches begin to see themselves as the pastors of their workplace, or of their neighborhood, mission becomes a lifestyle. We cannot compartmentalize our lives if we view every moment of the day as missional. In missional church life there needs to be a balance between time in communion with God, fellowship with the body of Christ, and reaching out in service to the lost.

36. Murray, *Church Planting*, 46.

Recapturing mission as a way of life for the church community begins by looking at Jesus' life and ministry. In three years, Jesus was able to transform the most unlikely band of men and women into devoted disciples. As church planters, our goal is not just to find church members, but also to make devoted disciples. In churches today we can find two types of disciples, those who are committed or driven by a personal agenda, and those who are devoted or driven by a Kingdom agenda. Kingdom disciples are devoted to Christ, His people, and His mission.³⁷ How did Jesus do this? Jesus did not teach a seminar; rather He lived his life among his disciples, modeling what it looks like to be missional. Jesus showed his disciples how to stay connected to the Father, how to relate to real people on their level, and how to serve and live life intentionally. Robert Logan shares seven principles he has discerned from the Gospels on how Jesus lived. These principles are: "staying connected with the Father; integrating into the culture; living with purpose; engaging authentically with others; serving the 'least of these'; calling people to follow Jesus; and, cultivating others to live incarnationally."³⁸ Jesus saw himself as a Rabbi who called people into a relationship and to imitate his way of life. The Rabbinic method did more than teach the truth, it imparted a way of life. That was the key to Jesus' success in training his followers. As church planters, we must move from teaching others to understand, to teaching disciples to obey all that Jesus taught. Discipleship is a process of learning to live in Jesus' way of life. Ministry is not about how

37. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 70.

38. Robert E. Logan, *The Missional Journey* (St. Charles: Church Smart Resources, 2013), 28.

much I know, but how well I live. "You cannot reproduce what you do not incarnate."³⁹

Relationships are the means by which the discipleship process is engaged.

Robert Coleman in his groundbreaking book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* identifies the rabbinic process of Jesus in his process of training his disciples.⁴⁰ Jesus strategically invested his life into a few people even as he ministered to the crowds. Jesus was not interested in drawing or impressing the crowds but in marshaling in the Kingdom. Jesus' principles of disciple-making began with selecting a few men that the Father had given him, then spending time together so they could see his life. Jesus called them to count the cost of following him, imparted his life and vision to them, delegated ministry to them, and finally prepared them to reproduce other disciples.

Alan Hirsch in his book, *The Forgotten Ways*, recognized that something was missing from the current way we function as the church. In studying the dynamic at work in the early Christian movement of the first century and the underground Chinese church, Hirsch discovered a common ingredient in these movements, which he labeled 'Apostolic Genius'. The Apostolic Genius is possible because of a missional DNA that is present in every believer and church though latent and hidden in the western church.

He writes

that all God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius (the primal

39. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Kingdom Quest*, 97.

40. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan for Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1994). Coleman's treatment of Jesus method for making disciples is excellent. He identifies the process of Jesus as selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction.

missional potencies of the gospel and of God's people) lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. We have quite simply forgotten how to access and trigger it. This book is written to help us identify its constituent elements and to help us to (re)activate it so that we might once again truly be a truly transformative Jesus movement in the West.⁴¹

Hirsch identifies six elements of the missional DNA starting with the Lordship of Jesus at the center, disciple-making, missional-incarnational impulse, apostolic environment, organic systems, and *communitas* not community.⁴² *Communitas* is the close relationships that develop out of sharing a common mission or experience. In seeking to identify the seminal elements needed to move a church from a pastoral care mode to a missionary empowerment mode Hirsch reintroduces the need for a missionary thrust for every church as a normal part of life in Christ.

At its very heart, Christianity is, therefore, a messianic movement, one that seeks to consistently embody the life, spirituality, and mission of its Founder. Discipleship, becoming like Jesus our Lord and Founder, lies at the epicenter of the church's task. It means that Christology must define all that we do and say. It also means that in order to recover the ethos of authentic Christianity, we need to refocus our attention back to the Root of it all, to recalibrate ourselves and our organizations around the person and work of Jesus the Lord.⁴³

I agree with Hirsch that discipleship lays at the core of the church's mission and that our ecclesiology must be determined by our missiology. The role of the church is not just to make more informed followers of Christ, but to make missionaries who will carry the

41. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 21.

42. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 25.

43. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 94.

gospel message through their words and deeds, as Jesus did, into a desperately needy world.

For Jesus, disciple-making was at the heart of his strategy, and it should be for us as well. The transformational experience of the gospel that changes people from the inside out needs to be infused with an incarnational lifestyle. Disciples reveal the presence and power of Jesus indwelling them in their everyday life. The world watches the church to see if there is an authentic, honest community. Our community together reveals Christ to the world. True fellowship (*koinonia*) is connected to mission, for to know the Father's heart we must be about the Father's business. We need to rethink what constitutes church life in the western church. Many of our current programs and structures hinder the mission of making disciples who can make disciples following Paul's pattern in 2 Tim 2:2 (NIV), "And these things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

Leadership development is another key element in discipleship. Without a pathway for leadership development, the disciple-making mission of the church, with the goal of more fully expressing the Kingdom reign of God, will be hampered. An understanding of the role of the five-fold ministry given by Jesus in Eph 4:11-12 is crucial for the church community to grow up into the fullness of Christ. The function of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher is to equip the people of God to do the work of the ministry. Servant leadership, following the heart and example of Jesus, is a fundamental value. The Hebrew word 'to lead' used in Pss 23:2 literally means "to run

with a sparkle,”⁴⁴ or to live in such a way that others will be drawn to the example of your life. Every follower of Jesus is called to run with a sparkle as they let the light of their actions shine before the world (Matt 5:16).

Conclusion

The church exists for the mission of God. This mission invites disenfranchised people into a new economy called the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is an all-encompassing reality that redefines who one is, how one is to live, and vision and values by which one will live. The renewal of the church for the twenty-first century will flow from the biblical and theological foundations of the Kingdom of God, a biblical understanding of the Church as the called people of God, and a redefinition of the mission of God that reproduces disciples.

44. Psalms 23:2 the Hebrew word for lead, *nahal*, has a primitive root meaning to run with a sparkle. Accessed on January 10, 2019. “*nahal*,” Bible Hub, biblehub.com/Hebrew/5095.htm (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance).

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Discussion on the Future of the Church

Major changes confront the church in America today. What has worked in the past for providing a context for ministry and growth are proving to be ineffective in our postmodern culture of today. The traditional, evangelical church increasingly is being confronted with the choice of changing or dying. What are the changes that need to be made for these churches to not just survive but thrive in the twenty-first century? Will changing the venue and mode of worship or launching a marketing campaign with a fresh vision revitalize the church? Will becoming more seeker-oriented, or adopting the style of successful mega-churches help to turn the tide of decline? Though some of these changes may be beneficial to provide a more meaningful worship experience, without an understanding of the cultural changes taking place, and especially without an understanding of God's call and purpose for his church, the changes will simply be cosmetic.

In this literature review I will seek to discuss the issues facing the church today, how leaders have been thinking about God's vision and mission for the church, common hindrances that will prevent change and growth, and key changes that the American church needs to wrestle with if the church is to communicate the gospel in a post-Christian world. The conversation will focus on the following topics or issues: 1. The

Need for Change, 2. The Challenges Facing the Church, 3. The Mission of God, 4. The Church as Missional Community.

The Need for Change

A crisis is brewing in the American evangelical church. According to the research done by the authors of *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, there has been a significant decrease in church attendance, a loss of youth in church programs, growing clergy burnout, and an increase in biblical illiteracy, not to mention the growing numbers of scandals and corruptions reported in the news.¹ Ed Stetzer and David Putman report that the percentage of Christians in the United States population dropped 9% from 1990-2001 while the unchurched population doubled from 1991-2004.² They attribute this to the changing culture in North America. What was once a Christian oriented culture has now shifted to a Post-Christian, postmodern culture in which the church struggles to effectively communicate the message of the gospel. Eddie Gibbs in his seminal book, *ChurchNext*, writes,

During the past four decades, churches have found themselves increasingly marginalized and their influence on society considerably weakened. The church's loss of social strength has revealed its spiritual impoverishment so that there is a loss of nerve. Most mainline churches have experienced serious numerical decline to the point that the continuing viability of increasing numbers of churches, especially in rural and inner-city areas, is a matter of growing concern.³

1. Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 2.

2. Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 8.

3. Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 10.

Gibbs believes that the church is at a critical turning point. The culture of modernism is being replaced by postmodernism that presents both the greatest challenge and opportunity for the church. Gibbs writes, "Therefore, churches in the West must recognize that they face a missionary challenge that is more urgent and radical than it has been for many generations."⁴ The rest of his book details the issues the church must navigate in order to move into mission. New wine is meant for new wineskins. "But those new wineskins cannot simply be freshly made versions of the old models. Neither can they be cut from a template made from blueprints provided by a handful of high-profile churches that have succeeded in bucking the national trends."⁵

Michael Breen agrees that the evangelical church is facing a crisis. He writes, "As we look around as Christendom is crumbling and the landscape of the church is forever changed, a stark revelation emerges: Most of us have been trained and educated for a world that no longer exists."⁶ He believes that the church in America is not effectively fulfilling the Great Commission. The reason there are declining numbers is that the church has not been able to make disciples who follow Jesus. He observes,

Are we just good at getting people together once a week and maybe into a small group, or are we actually good at producing the types of people we read about in the New Testament? Have we shifted our criteria for a good disciple as someone who shows up to our stuff, gives money and occasionally feeds poor people? Effective discipleship builds the church, not the other way around.⁷

4. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 11.

5. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 11.

6. Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (Pawleys Island: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011), Kindle. Chapter 1.

7. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 1.

In his book *Building a Discipleship Culture*, Breen makes a case for disciple-making to be the core of the church's mission.

In their book *Organic Reformation*, Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson present the need for the church to rethink its ecclesiology in light of God's call to a Kingdom mission. They contend that the cultural Christianity of the West is a 'domesticated, sanitized and civilized' form of the real thing. The church has become a "vendor" and a "circus" in its desire to attract people to its Sunday morning worship⁸ These may be harsh words to describe the state of the evangelical church, but the truth remains; they do believe that the church must change its focus, mission, and structures to fulfill that mission or die.

In their book *The Tangible Kingdom*, Hugh Halter and Matt Smay approach the crisis of the evangelical church from a different perspective. As church planters with a heart to reach those far from Christ, they believe that the evangelical church's motives, methods, and structures are keeping them from communicating the gospel clearly. "The lack of 'conversions' is not the real problem. That's just a visible symptom of the level of blindness in our present forms of church and the fact that our Christian kingdoms need more of God's Kingdom to 'emerge' within us."⁹ They write, "Almost every statistical reference to the church indicates that we not only can't draw people, but we can't even keep the ones we have."¹⁰

8. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, (Manchester, NH: PraxisMedia, 2009), 15-17.

9. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 14.

10. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 11.

The evangelical church in America finds itself in a quandary. The changing culture demands that the church change in order to proclaim the good news of Jesus, yet the need to preserve traditions and maintain the programs of the past make it difficult to move forward. Clearly, the church must consider its course of action carefully and respond to the need for change or face becoming obsolete.

The Challenges Facing the Church

A church caught in maintenance mode faces several challenges to move toward engaging mission. Questions concerning the health of the congregation would be legitimate. Does the congregation have healthy ways of dealing with conflict, change, and stress? Do they have healthy communication practices and a healthy view of leadership? There are also the hindrances, either theological or behavioral, that could keep the church from considering the call to mission. Traditions may be a stumbling block, for new wine doesn't do well in old wineskins. The authors discuss the challenges facing a traditional church that is seeking to reengage its call to mission.

In his book *Transforming Church*, Kevin Ford discusses five key indicators of church health, which in reality become five arenas for the church to move from maintenance to mission. He discovered, "Church health, rather than church growth, is the primary indicator of a church's ability to transform its members, fulfill its mission and reinvent itself."¹¹ In his work as a church consultant, Ford saw these five areas emerge as challenges for churches to address. The five movements are as follows:

11. Kevin Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great* (Carol Stream: Tyndale/Salt River, 2007), 8.

Consumerism to Community, Incongruence to Code (DNA), Autocracy to Shared Leadership, Cloister to Missional, and Inertia to Reinvention.¹² Each of these movements reveals the degree to which modernism has infiltrated the mindset of the church. Churches face the challenges of consumerism, pragmatism, centralized leadership structures, polarization, and complacency. Ford uses case studies from five different churches he has worked with to illustrate these challenges.

Consumerism is defined as “individualism on steroids.”¹³ Without a doubt, we live in a self-centered, self-absorbed culture. The writers in *Missional Church* trace consumerism as the logical result of historical and philosophical foundations of North American culture from the 1700s.

Renaissance humanism from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries had prepared the way for this development by placing renewed emphasis on the individual. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation also reinforced this focus by stressing the importance of individual responsibility in relation to one's personal salvation.¹⁴

Furthermore, the Enlightenment emphasized personal freedom based on the autonomous self, which exists apart from monarchs or the church, and this freedom is guaranteed by a social contract called civil government.¹⁵ Thus the modern consumer was born. Ford clarifies that the problem is not in the recognition of the importance of the individual, but

is the *glorification* of the individual. When the individual self is glorified over the greater good of the community, rights begin to take precedence

12. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 9-12.

13. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 31.

14. Guder, *Missional Church*, 20.

15. Guder, *Missional Church*, 21.

over responsibility, isolated pursuits replace the struggle for the common good, desires are twisted to resemble needs, and the imitation is presented as the real thing.¹⁶

When church members act as consumers, community is compromised.

The second challenge facing churches Ford discusses is incongruence to the code or DNA of the church. It is common for churches in crisis to look for a proven program for church growth. This pragmatic approach to developing ministry can actually backfire if it is inconsistent with the church's DNA code. Ford defines the code as the collective personality of the church, the combination of values, personal gifts, and traditions. Every church is unique in its calling, location and the people who are a part of its community. Aligning ministry with the coded DNA of the church is important in moving toward missional engagement.¹⁷

The third challenge is one of rethinking leadership structures. In addressing leadership issues Ford contrasts autocratic leadership styles with shared leadership styles. In American culture, the rugged leader is elevated to almost cult status. According to Ford, when leadership is a noun it is associated with power. The leader is one with all the answers.

When exercising power is the central value of leadership, the questions revolve around who is in charge and who makes the decisions. People defer responsibility to the leaders who then become in charge of everything. When leadership is defined by power, the people are not mobilized for action. More often, they are listless, fearful, or simply uninvolved.¹⁸

16. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 32.

17. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 57.

18. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 94.

Ford identifies two potential shortcomings with this leadership style which he names the "power zone" and the "authority zone."¹⁹ In the power zone, there is the potential of the abuse of power when a leader uses his power to coerce others into action. In the authority zone, the temptation is to use the authority given to deliver what the people want rather than lead toward God's purposes. Ford observes, "The use of authority is essentially about maintenance – protecting people, keeping order, and establishing parameters."²⁰

Defining leadership as a verb changes the dynamic of leadership. According to scripture, biblical leaders are not to exercise power and authority over God's people like the pagan nations do, but rather to lead through serving others. "Leadership as a verb is not about who makes the decisions. In transforming churches, leadership is about the leader mobilizing others for ministry."²¹ Ford defines the type of leadership needed to help churches recover mission as one that "shares power. It invites rather than coerces. It recognizes rather than manipulates. It engages rather than separates. It serves rather than rules."²² Leading a church from maintenance to mission requires leaders who will share power, inspire, and equip the saints for ministry.

Eddie Gibbs, in his book *ChurchNext*, spends three chapters discussing the leadership challenge in the twenty-first century. In the chapter entitled "From Schooling Professionals to Mentoring Leaders" Gibbs addresses the training process of church

19. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 94-96.

20. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 96.

21. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 105.

22. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 106.

leaders. He challenges the current educational model in seminaries of developing academic professionals with management skills to lead churches as insufficient to meet the current need. If leadership is to be shared, it needs to be developed within the local church through mentoring emerging leaders. "Leaders in the Christian movement are God's appointed agents to bring about transformation, to set direction, and to monitor the pace."²³ With the rise of the Internet and the information readily available to lay people, the days of the pastor as a resident expert are coming to an end. Leaders that help churches transition into mission must learn to listen, ask pertinent questions, train leaders and mobilize the saints for ministry. Gibbs acknowledges the role seminaries play in preparing people for ministry and encourages a partnership between the seminary and the church in making this training available, especially for smaller churches.

Ford's fourth movement is one from cloister to missional. Will the church seek to maintain what it has already, or will it press into the risks involved with engaging God's mission? Churches can become cloisters very easily in the face of a changing culture. When traditions become ensconced on par with scripture, when change threatens the congregation's security, churches will circle the wagons and protect the status quo. However, a vision for God's mission can propel a congregation forward. As Ford observes, "Our mission is to participate in the outworking of God's transforming love as it reshapes the whole created order. Two biblical mandates for the church, the great commission, and the great commandment, both emphasize love and service to those

23. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 106.

outside the boundaries of our own group."²⁴ One of the main reasons churches will cloister rather than engage mission is a fear based on perceived feelings of insecurity, incompetence, and insignificance²⁵ Hugh Halter and Matt Smay (*The Tangible Kingdom*) agree that the typical response to changing culture is to circle the wagons and keep the sheep safe at all costs. They state that this response only strengthens any false assumptions held by outsiders against the church. "Influence doesn't happen by extracting ourselves from the world for the sake of our values, but by bringing our values into the culture."²⁶

The fifth challenge Ford discusses is the challenge to overcome inertia. In his years of consulting work with churches, Ford never heard anyone say they were unwilling to change. "Just don't ask me to give up things that are important to me."²⁷ is the usual reply. Presenting a compelling vision for joining God on his mission may provide the impetus to break the inertia in maintenance churches. Ford comments that people resist change because of high levels of anxiety that the change is producing. If change is imposed upon the congregation they will become frightened and resist change. If they are gripped with fear it will lead to paralysis. If there is no sense of urgency in the vision then they will become complacent.²⁸ Bringing a church through transformative change requires careful leadership. Understanding the process of change and helping the congregation identify that process is important. It is through this

24. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 124.

25. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 134.

26. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 31.

27. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 159.

28. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 159.

process of change that the church's ministry and mission can realign with their DNA code.

Ford's analysis reveals the hidden assumptions prevalent in many congregations today. These assumptions form roadblocks that prevent churches from being effective in mission. In preparing a congregation to engage culture and make disciples, leaders must first address these assumptions. For example, Christians assume that the church exists to serve their needs. This assumption of entitlement contradicts the servant attitude of Jesus who came not "to be served but to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28 NIV). Incarnation is not about getting but giving. The key question is not, "What does this church offer me?" but "What can I offer the Body of Christ?"

Another roadblock to be removed is the false assumption that to be holy means to be separated from interaction with society. When Jesus called his people to be salt and light in the world, he did not mean for the light to be under a bushel or the salt to remain in the saltshaker. Cloistering ourselves for the sake of remaining holy contradicts Jesus' ministry pattern. Jesus hung out with tax collectors and sinners because they had the greatest need. Jesus did not compromise his holiness by his associations with sinners.

And finally, leaders can help their congregation overcome fear and inertia that pulls them with a gravitational force into the security of their church buildings. Through small steps, believers can be encouraged to pray for and speak with their family and friends. Jesus told us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to cast out laborers into the harvest field for the field is ripe for harvest.

In chapter four of the *Missional Church* another challenge facing traditional churches is identified. Churches in the early twenty-first century are at a unique crossroads to reconsider their purpose as a church. "The church must then ask, 'Are our structures and our assumptions about the church's nature and purpose no longer suited to the time and place in which we currently live?'"²⁹ Assessing one's assumptions of church is always challenging but a necessary process. Another way to ask the question would be, "Is the church a place or a people?"³⁰ Our cultural understanding of church is "the place where a Christianized civilization gathers for worship and the place where the Christian character of the society is cultivated."³¹ However, the biblical definition of church is as a "body of people sent on mission,"³² or "as a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people."³³

It is a monumental shift in thinking to view the church as the people of God sent on mission rather than understanding church as a building where God's people gather for worship. Instead of viewing mission as a function of our ecclesiology (i.e., How do we get more people to attend church services?) we will view our ecclesiology as a function of our mission (i.e., How do we make disciples for God's Kingdom?). Our church structures will then serve the mission of God. As the authors of *Missional Church* have so aptly written:

The church becomes redefined as the community spawned by the mission of God and gathered up into that mission. The church was

29. Guder, *Missional Church*, 78.

30. Guder, *Missional Church*, 79.

31. Guder, *Missional Church*, 80.

32. Guder, *Missional Church*, 80.

33. Guder, *Missional Church*, 81.

coming to understand that in any place it is a community sent by God. “Mission” is not something the church does, a part of its total program. No, the church’s essence is missional for the calling and sending action of God forms its identity. Mission is founded on the mission of God in the world, rather than the church’s effort to extend itself.³⁴

In their book *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Communities*, Hugh Halter and Matt Smay challenge the church to view those who are not yet Christians through a missional lens. They contend that the church's mission should no longer be simply to increase church attendance. Instead, they believe, "Church should be what ends up happening as a natural response to people wanting to follow us, be with us and like us as we are following the way of Christ."³⁵ In their work with churches Halter and Smay have observed that some church leaders want to cross the missional bridge but their “forms, rules, and paradigms for ministry don’t allow them to get to the other side.”³⁶

The last challenge for the church to overcome is changing from an attractional paradigm to an incarnational-missional paradigm. From church growth strategies to seeker-sensitive churches the emphasis has been on inviting people to ‘come to us’. As Eddie Gibbs observes: “Whereas in traditional societies the churches have operated on a come-to-us- philosophy, this is no longer adequate when the church finds itself marginalized and existing as just one piece in a complex, social, kaleidoscopic mosaic with the pieces constantly realigning.”³⁷ Gibbs does an excellent job evaluating the

34. Guder, *Missional Church*, 81-82.

35. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 30.

36. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 35.

37. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 172.

attractional methodology in the seeker-sensitive churches in this chapter. He believes that this methodology worked well for this past season. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson agree in more graphic terms when they add:

The Church has become a place where we believe that if people come they will be awed and won to Christ. We are trying very hard to be an *attraction*, a *carnival ride*, and *event*, rather than a *people* who embrace a holistic *way of life* founded in Christ. The Church tends to make tame the life that was once in us and then confines its constituency to a cage of respectability and safety instead of releasing people back into the wild where the Church is meant to live untamed, full of love and life in the midst of sin, pain, despair and suffering, incarnating the very presence and love of God.³⁸

By contrast, the incarnational approach expresses a 'go to them' philosophy. In John 20:21 Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you..." To be a community of God's people sent to live out the life of Christ in the context of everyday life requires a major shift in thinking about the church's nature and purpose. Johnston and Perkinson stated it well: "The Church in its local expression is a community of disciple, not a gathering of consumers, and has mission as an outflow, or outcome of way of life (Acts 2:47)."³⁹ Thus, the church has challenges to face and overcome on its way to engaging the mission of God.

Halter and Smay contrast the 'attractional' approach with the 'incarnational' approach. The challenge for them is not whether one has a Sunday morning worship service; rather it is the "attempt to draw to church people with whom we have no

38. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 15.

39. Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 19.

relationship.”⁴⁰ They are critical of the discipleship pathway the attractional approach creates for people coming to a church service and responding to the gospel without a relational connection. The pathway goes something like this: an unbeliever is invited to church, confesses belief in Christ, repeats a prayer and is enrolled in a cognitive discipleship class without having someone disciple him.⁴¹

By contrast, the ‘incarnational’ approach seeks to “first create a people to which someone can belong so that they can feel and see aspects of the gospel lived out.”⁴² Believers seek to build a relationship with unbelievers inviting them into their lives and faith community. The unbeliever is able to see faith in action and participate in community as he is being drawn to Christ. Discipleship is not just cognitively based but relationally based.

The Mission of God

In helping churches move toward mission it is important to define the mission to which they are called. Healthy churches will have the necessary resources to engage in effective mission. Moving from a maintenance or survival mode requires faith in the calling and provision of the Lord. Each of the authors in this literature review contributes a piece of the picture of God's mission in the world. That mission is linked to the Kingdom or Reign of God as it is being expressed in a limited way today.

40. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 93.

41. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 94.

42. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 95.

The contributors of *Missional Church* describe the church as a people sent to share the gospel. For them, the church does not have a mission but rather the mission of God has a church to carry it out. The gospel is the good news that the Reign of God has come into the present. When Jesus began preaching he proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is present now. The mission of the church is to humbly receive the Reign of God, live under God's authority and to share the reality of God's Reign with all its benefits.⁴³ Although the church is not the Kingdom, its mission is to represent the reality of the Kingdom or Reign of God on earth as a community of faith. God's people are to display the fruits of a people forgiven and surrendered to God. How they live will be a witness that a new reality has entered the world. Their unity will bear witness to the world that Jesus was sent by the Father.⁴⁴ The church represents the Reign of God as a servant continuing the works of Jesus through acts of compassion and healing.⁴⁵ And finally, the church represents the Reign of God as its messenger through its ministry of teaching and proclamation.⁴⁶

Missional Church devotes chapter 5 – “Missional Witness” - to developing the concept of the missional church as the Apostle to the world. They use the word ‘Apostle’ to mean one who is sent on a mission. As such, the church stands apart from culture and yet at the same time incarnated in culture. “For this reason, the church is always bicultural, conversant in the language and customs of the surrounding culture and living

43. Guder, *Missional Church*, 90-97. The biblical concept of believers receiving or entering into the Reign of God as opposed to building or extending the Reign of God is developed fully in these pages.

44. Guder, *Missional Church*, 103.

45. Guder, *Missional Church*, 104.

46. Guder, *Missional Church*, 106.

toward the language and ethics of the gospel.”⁴⁷ The church is not controlled by the culture, yet one of its tasks is to communicate “the gospel so that the surrounding culture will understand it”.⁴⁸ Since the church as an Apostolic witness stands apart from culture while at the same time engaging with culture, it is in a unique place to critique its cultural environment and to affirm aspects of the culture that do not contradict God’s rule. The missional church is to be a holy nation among the nations. “Thus the church is that gathering of the reign of God assembled to be a sign of that reign, to proclaim the reign of God in word and deed, to make decisions, and to give allegiance to their Ruler.”⁴⁹ And so the church as the ‘sent one’ into the dominant culture is to rise above politics and proclaim an alternative kingdom, and alternative culture and community that exists within a larger culture.

Stetzer and Putman in *Breaking the Missional Code* define the church’s mission by pointing to the commissions of Jesus. Jesus commissioned his church to make disciples out of every nation (Matt 28:18-20), and he sent us in the same way he was sent by his Father (John 10:19-21). According to Stetzer and Putman “We are to be a missional church by calling, nature and choice.”⁵⁰ God’s mission defines our mission. In responding to God’s call to mission we must be willing to set aside our personal preferences. A missionary church cannot be a social club where we only admit those

47. Guder, *Missional Church*, 114.

48. Guder, *Missional Church*, 114.

49. Guder, *Missional Church*, 118.

50. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 31.

people with whom we are comfortable. "The church is one of the few organizations in the world that does not exist for the benefit of its members."⁵¹

Stetzer and Putman believe that there is a profound shift toward the missional church. They write, "The Missional church is not just another phase of church life but a full expression of who the church is and what it is called to be and do."⁵² There is a new understanding of mission, which starts with "our understanding of who Jesus is and what he sends us to do."⁵³ This profound change is more than doing friendship evangelism. It starts with our Christology (understanding of who Jesus is) that informs our missiology (how we minister) and finally influences our ecclesiology (church structures). The mission of God now becomes the driving force behind church function.

Ryan Faust, who is the pastor at Grace Church in Seattle, Washington wrote his Doctor of Ministry thesis on creating a missional community within Grace Church. He designed a strategy for transitioning a program-based church into a cell church model. For him, Jesus' Great Commission is the focal point of ministry. He writes, "The Great Commission is both a local and global missionary enterprise meant to include active participation of future disciples devoted to the teachings of Jesus (Acts 2:42; 9:26-31)."⁵⁴ Christians today do not fully understand the meaning and implications of being a disciple of Jesus. Faust continues:

Therefore, I often hear pushback from Christians who only attend Sunday services or avoid Christian community because they assume a faith

51. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 44.

52. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 48.

53. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 53.

54. Ryan Faust, *Recontextualizing Church: From An Attractional-Events & Program-Driven Model to a Missional-Community & Cell-Driven Model*, Doctor of Ministry Thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2017, 33.

commitment is all Jesus expects of His followers. As will be seen, the truth is Jesus expects a Christian to become a disciple and live in Christian community under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, engaged in outreach and discipleship.⁵⁵

For Faust, the mission of disciple-making changed his church structure. God sent his Son on mission into our world to redeem humanity and to call disciple makers who would continue Jesus' mission.

In *ChurchNext*, Gibbs discusses God's call to mission. "As we have already noted, the church will need to reenter as a missionary presence with an apostolic stance, living adventurously as a subversive movement, realizing afresh its total reliance on the Lord."⁵⁶ No longer can the church stand above culture to judge society's ills for it is called to enter into culture with the remedy of the gospel. A church that takes to heart being God's called and sent people is ready to be an instrument of God's mission. According to Gibbs, "Mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. *Mission* means 'sending,' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history."⁵⁷ The bottom line is simply this: Mission is about obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus.

In *The Organic Reformation* Johnston and Perkinson develop the theme of the Kingdom of God as it relates to the church's mission. In the chapter entitled "The Heart of the Kingdom" they present a case for the church to be the agent through which the Kingdom of God is seen. The goal of church life is to an expression of life in the Kingdom. They identify the Great Commandments and Great Commission as the "Irreducible

55. Faust, *Recontextualizing Church*, 33.

56. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 51.

57. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 51.

Core” of Christianity.⁵⁸ The church is to live in right relationship with God (love God) and one another (love each other) as well as engage in the mission of making disciples. In the chapter entitled "The Way of the Kingdom" they detail the rabbinical process, Jesus used to train the twelve and relate it to the mentoring process of discipleship. For them discipleship is more than an educational program, it is imparting a way of life. The method of discipleship is incarnational – watch my life as I follow Jesus. The issues of everyday life become the curriculum as we respond in faith to every situation life presents to us. The church embracing the mission of God becomes an agent for the Kingdom of God.

Halter and Smay, writing in *The Tangible Kingdom*, stress that the starting point for a mission-oriented church does not start with what’s wrong, but with what’s possible. Understanding the assumptions, experiences, worldviews, and emotions of the people they are sent to reach is critically important. In their chapter entitled “Posture” Halter and Smay talk about the importance of non-verbal communication or our ‘posture’ toward those outside of Christ. They correctly note that “words communicate what we know, posture represents what we believe and feel.”⁵⁹ Clear communication of the gospel is the goal of every missionary. Halter and Smay write "Posture is important because it can either obscure the message of truth or enhance and pave the way for a clear rendering of the truth."⁶⁰ Perhaps one reason people do not hear the gospel is that non-verbal communication can cancel the truth. Non-Christians will read the face of

58. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 30.

59. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 39.

60. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 40.

Christians before they will listen to what they have to say. According to Halter and Smay, "When posture is wrong, you'll always be perceived to be an enemy or judge. When your posture is correct, you'll be perceived to be an advocate, a person who supports and speaks in favor of or pleads for another."⁶¹ The church's mission is to represent Jesus in our society.

The structure of a traditional evangelical church is often illustrated as a triangle with the church leaders on top at the point and the congregation on the bottom at the base. This is an authority-based structure. Halter and Smay advocate tipping over the pyramid in order to illustrate a mission-based structure. The church leaders are now at the tip of a wedge pointing toward mission in the community. Leaders now can lead the congregation in mission engagement by personal example.⁶² Missional Church sees mission as a work of a community of God's people living out the reality of the good news that they are proclaiming. Halter and Smay believe that "the primary function (of church) is to actively move into the culture to embody and en flesh the good news into every nook and cranny of this world."⁶³ The benefit for this structure is that it provides a place for non-Christians (they call sojourners) to see and discover the reality of Jesus in the midst of Christian community. Instead of viewing mission as 'raiding parties' into enemy territory with the hopes of separating people from their relational network, the church can now view mission as intentionally moving into those relational networks with the gospel of the Kingdom that acts like yeast leavening the whole loaf.

61. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 42.

62. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 108-110.

63. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 108.

Mike Breen sees God's mission as simply making disciples. In chapter two of *Building a Discipleship Culture*, Breen discusses Jesus' model and method for making disciples and compares it with the current method used by churches today. Jesus' model centered on what he calls an invitation-challenge framework.

Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person's life and all the vibrancy, safety, love and encouragement that reside there. To learn from the places you clearly see Jesus at work in people's lives, which you can see only by having access to them. But by accepting that invitation, you also accept the challenge that comes with it. The challenge to live into your identity as a son or daughter of the King.⁶⁴

For the mission of God to be engaged the church needs to be intentional in their disciple-making process. The invitation-challenge dynamic provides a framework for discipleship. However, the challenge must be given in the context of a personal, mentoring relationship. Breen remarks that often the challenges given from the pulpit on Sunday morning are not followed through with accountability. Small groups are often seen as places where discipleship may occur. However, Breen is correct when he observes that small groups "are by design an excellent place to create community and a warm comfortable environment, but they are not built to offer challenge."⁶⁵ According to Breen small groups offer the context for relational discipleship. However, the framework must be more intentional than simply a Bible study with a cozy environment.

If God's mission for us is to make disciples, then we ask, "What is a disciple?" and "How do we go about making one?" In chapter three Breen addresses the process of

64. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 2.

65. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 2.

disciple-making. The Greek word translated disciple is 'mathetes' which means learner.⁶⁶ Breen defines disciples of Jesus as "lifelong learners of Jesus".⁶⁷ Not only do disciples learn more about Jesus, but also more importantly disciples learn the ways of Jesus - that is doing what Jesus did and becoming like him in character and attitude. According to Breen, there are three ways to learn: classroom/lecture, apprenticeship, and immersion.⁶⁸ He argues that learning happens best when all three are put into practice. Yet the discipleship process used by most churches favors the classroom/lecture model almost exclusively. "The way most churches have structured the discipleship process, it is as if we are saying, "If I can just get the right information into their heads, if they can just think about it the right way, then they will become more like Jesus."⁶⁹

The other learning processes, apprenticeship, and immersion, are utilized in many training programs. Surgeons must go through a residency period where they are apprenticed in the art of surgery. Musicians, teachers, and plumbers all learn their trade through a practical apprenticeship process. Missionaries seeking fluency in a foreign language usually experience immersion into the language and culture they are seeking to master. Likewise, Jesus used all three methods of learning as he poured his life into his disciples. He taught by lecture (Sermon on the Mount); he taught by apprenticeship as the Twelve Apostles watched Jesus minister, and then he sent them out to do it; and he taught by immersion as his disciples were invited to "be with him" (Mark 3:14 NIV).

66. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 3.

67. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 3.

68. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 3.

69. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 3.

As a Rabbi, Jesus used the rabbinic method of his day for training his disciples. The goal of a disciple is to become like his Rabbi or teacher in every way.

In *Organic Reformation*, Johnston and Perkinson agree that Jesus' method of discipleship must be viewed through the lens of the rabbinical process. They write, "Jesus is a first-century rabbi, functioning within the reality of Judaism as one whose heart is set on fulfilling the Torah in every way that God, the Father, originally intended."⁷⁰ Jesus incarnated the life of God into the Jewish culture of his day. Johnston and Perkinson go on to say:

The discipleship process of Jesus finds its basis in the promise of Mark 1:17 as it anticipates the disciples' new vocation as "fishers of men" rather than mere students of the Law. The disciples would ultimately share in the ministry of Jesus and eventually continue and multiply it rather than simply being proponents of the Law. This is the key to the relational rabbinic process as embodied by Jesus, distinguishing Him from the rabbis of the day: Jesus was calling these men to Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and not just to the teaching of Torah.⁷¹

Jesus saw his purpose not in gathering the crowds, but in calling disciples to himself, using life-pattern teaching while living in community with his disciples. Johnston and Perkinson also point out that Jesus spent more time with the Twelve apostles than he did with the seventy-two or the multitudes.⁷² Thus, Johnston and Perkinson define a

70. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 61.

71. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 63.

72. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 66. The authors develop this concept of life-pattern teaching showing how Jesus employed this in his ministry. It is also called "life-on-life" teaching.

disciple as one who is devoted to the person of Christ, to His Church and to His mission.⁷³

The church today seeking to engage with God's mission of making disciples, calling people into a relationship with Jesus and into a kingdom way of life, should study Jesus' model for disciple-making. Investing our lives into a few individuals who will, in turn, invest their lives in others can start a Jesus movement that could change our communities.

Ryan Faust summarizes the process of disciple-making as

not simply the teaching (*didasko*) of Christian values; rather it is an intimate call for Christians to adhere to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in community, and to go make disciples (*manthano*) of Jesus. The New Testament uses several words to convey this concept, giving clues of how Jesus modeled disciple-making for those He commissioned to do likewise. Jesus started the disciple-making process with the disciples (*mathetes*) by literally calling them to come after Him (*opiso mou*), to follow (*akoloutho*) Jesus and learn to become fishers of men and women. Jesus ministered to the crowds; He called, trained, and sent out the 72 to proclaim the gospel; but He focused on a small group of 12, investing heavily in leader development of few to carry the mantle after His ascension. These disciples developed a community known as the people of “the way” (*ho hodos*), “saints,” “brothers and sisters,” or more commonly today, “Christians” (*Christianoi*). The disciples passed on Christ’s teachings and exhorted each other to imitate (*mimetes*) Jesus with eternity in view. From the Scriptures one learns Jesus was a disciple-maker who taught a reproducible process of disciple-making, which He expected Christians to emulate until His return.⁷⁴

73. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 70-71.

74. Faust, *Recontextualizing Church*, 36-37.

The Church as Missional Community

God's mission has a church. If the traditional evangelical church is to move from seeking to maintain Christendom's way of life into embracing God's mission of making Kingdom oriented disciples, it will have to reevaluate its ecclesiology. The authors in this literature review all agree that the structure and function of the church must reflect and serve God's mission. In chapter six, "The Environment of the Kingdom", Johnston and Perkinson discuss their understanding of the church as a 'Kingdom Community'⁷⁵ The hallmark of Kingdom communities is love demonstrated in the relationship of the disciples toward each other and expressed in acts of compassion toward the wider community. This is vividly seen in the glimpse into church life given in Acts 2:42-47. The church as a community is "meant to be a family with a way of life."⁷⁶ Johnston and Perkinson describe this way of life as being relational, incarnational, missional, multiplying disciples, loving, welcoming to all as Christ has accepted us, giving, and forgiving.⁷⁷

In the *Missional Church*, the authors advocate for rethinking leadership structure. They write,

"The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership. The Spirit empowers the church for mission through the gifts of people. Leadership is a critical gift, provided by the Spirit because, as the Scriptures demonstrate, fundamental change in any body of people requires leaders capable of transforming its life and being transformed themselves."

75. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 77-86.

76. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 82.

77. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 83.

The leadership is to be shaped by the mission of God.⁷⁸ The goal of leadership is to equip the saints for the work of ministry as depicted in Eph 4:11-13⁷⁹ Leaders must adjust their role from being dispersers of the means of God's grace to mentors training others for ministry. The authors believe that the solo pastoral model must give way to the team ministry model recognizing that "every member is ordained into ministry in their baptism".⁸⁰ Instead of leaders recruiting members for the church, the people of God in missional communities become the penetrating force of God's reign.⁸¹ A key component of the Missional Church is that every member is a minister.

In their chapter on "Missional Structures: The Particular Community," the authors of *Missional Church* make a case for developing a missional ecclesiology.⁸² If God's mission is carried out through the calling of a particular people, then it requires organization forms and structures that will serve the mission. "The reign of Christ is jeopardized when any organizational structure becomes an end in itself. This happens whenever the institution places all its energy in its own maintenance."⁸³ Structures that hinder the mission are to be changed. Public worship as a celebration of the presence and reality of God is an encounter with the God who sends them. Worship is to provide assurance, comfort, and encouragement to those who are sent into the mission field. Church membership shifts from nominal membership in a social institution, or

78. Guder, *Missional Church*, 183.

79. Guder, *Missional Church*, 183-184. Chapter 7, "Equipping God's People for Mission" details their vision for church leaders preparing the church for mission versus leaders maintaining the status quo.

80. Guder, *Missional Church*, 200.

81. Guder, *Missional Church*, 204.

82. Guder, *Missional Church*, 221.

83. Guder, *Missional Church*, 229.

assurance of one's salvation, to enlistment into the community of God's people engaged in God's mission.⁸⁴

Eddie Gibbs, writing in *ChurchNext*, concurs with the need to change church structures to accommodate mission:

In contemporary society, which is increasingly permeated by postmodern thinking, maintenance-minded churches need to be transformed into missional communities, which will entail decentralizing their operations. Church leaders will need to facilitate this transition by giving higher priority to working outside the institution, functioning as teams of believers located in a highly polarized and pluralistic world. From a strategy of *invitation*, the churches must move to one of *infiltration*, to being the subversive and transforming presence of Jesus.⁸⁵

For the church to transition toward becoming a missional community, Gibbs recommends getting missionary training and learning to work from the margins of society with great humility.

In *The Tangible Kingdom* Halter and Smay develop a strategy for creating incarnational communities.⁸⁶ They identify two processes of church missionary life: Living Out and Inviting In. The living out process focuses on the habits missional people develop together. There are four practices that capture this process: leaving, listening, living among, and loving with no strings attached. Each of these practices moves Christians from church-based activities into developing relationships with those in the wider community. Leaving involves trading Christian activities with time spent building

84. Guder, *Missional Church*, 243-246. A detailed discussion on membership in the Body of Christ is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that membership structures need to be reconsidered in light of God's mission.

85. Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 218.

86. Halter and Smay in *The Tangible Kingdom* develop this strategy quite extensively in chapters 13-21.

relationships with non-Christians in the community. Listening means taking the time to listen to those far from Christ rather than making uninformed assumptions about them. Living among is about being incarnational. This habit "means participating in the natural activities of the culture around you, with whimsical holiness."⁸⁷ And Loving without strings attached involves blessing others in tangible ways as an expression of God's love.

The second process of 'Inviting In' involves inviting those who are being drawn to Christ into our life and community. Halter and Smay believe that the community of God's people living out their faith in Christ is the most powerful witness of all. They identify three primary spheres of incarnational community as "Communion, Community, and Mission."⁸⁸ They contend that at the intersection of these three spheres the Kingdom of God becomes tangible, or easily seen and experienced. In *The Organic Reformation*, these three spheres are identified as the "Irreducible Core" of loving God (communion), loving one another (community) and making disciples (mission).⁸⁹ These three spheres give the church a framework for life in Christ together and mission in the world.

In *Breaking the Missional Code*, Stetzer and Putman ask what it means to be a follower of Jesus today. The key for them is discipleship that reproduces disciples. In the process of developing disciples, they identify two conversions – a conversion to community (temporal) and a conversion to Christ (eternal).⁹⁰ Disciple-making involves a community where those coming to Christ can belong as they are coming to faith in

87. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 136.

88. Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 149.

89. Johnston and Perkinson, *The Organic Reformation*, 30.

90. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 124.

Christ. Stetzer and Putman believe change is needed for churches to grow. They discuss the need to become an inviting church with Sunday morning worship acting as the front door to the church community. Providing a safe place for people to experience the presence of God and encounter the gospel of Jesus is an important part of a missional community. Breaking the missional code essentially involves understanding who you are, understanding the community you are called to reach, and understanding where God is working.

In the chapter entitled "Building a Discipleship Culture," Breen identifies three things that are needed: a discipleship vehicle, people having access to your life, and a discipling language.⁹¹ The discipleship vehicle Breen uses is called the huddle. A huddle is a group of 4-10 people invited into a small group discipleship relationship. The group is closed and grows by multiplying out. Each member will be encouraged to start their own huddle with people they are leading to the Lord. The Huddle provides a place of accountability, encouragement, and access to the life of the leader. In developing the concept of the Huddle Breen is following the Jesus model of discipleship by giving a context for immersion. For the discipleship language, Breen developed LifeShapes, which teaches key concepts of discipleship through simple shapes.⁹² Having a common language to make biblical concepts easily transferable is key to developing a discipleship process that everyone can use.

91. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. Chapter 4.

92. Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, Part Two – LifeShapes Our Discipling Language. Chapter 5.

Summary

In reviewing the literature there is ample evidence suggesting that the traditional evangelical church is in need of a new reformation. The reformation is not one of theology but of structure and tradition informed by a renewed understanding of God's mission for his church. The western world ideology called modernism is giving way to a new perspective on life. The church in America, once considered the pillar of the community and the stabilizing force of culture, is now being disregarded and marginalized. Now is the time to reconsider church traditions and cultural attitudes, regarding outsiders in light of scripture. Now is the time to move from maintaining the past to engaging in God's mission, risking it all for the sake of the Reign of God on earth.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH PROJECT—BEST PRACTICE INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Moving a traditional evangelical church from maintenance toward engaging the mission of God is a challenging process. In our changing cultural landscape, there are many factors to consider that were not present a few generations ago. My research project involved conducting best practice interviews with several pastors who are actively transitioning their congregations toward mission. I chose this format so as to hear from those on the front lines who are engaging with this vital work of re-missioning the church. Obviously, this work is not an exact science. One cannot copy a model or a program that will work in every situation. Through these interviews, I hope to discern and distill principles that can be applied in a variety of situations to help churches reconnect with their God-given call to mission.

Project Design

I developed a list of interview questions that formed the basis for our discussion together.¹ The questions were sent to the pastor being interviewed a week before our scheduled interview. During the interview, these questions were discussed, with appropriate follow up questions asked as I saw fit. Each interview lasted between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes.

1. See Appendix A for the list of interview questions.

I chose the pastors to be interviewed on the basis of their experiences with the churches they lead, as well as the fact that I knew them personally. Knowing each pastor personally gave me an advantage in that I was privy to background knowledge, which helped in the analysis of his interview. The pastors came from a variety of church backgrounds and experiences. Yet they all had one thing in common; they have all had experience in transitioning traditional churches toward a missional context. I specifically chose pastors who had a strong view of God's Kingdom, and who saw the church's mission as making disciples of Jesus for the Kingdom. I did not want leaders of churches who relied on marketing techniques to grow large churches centered around programs for every age group. Since I am interested in transitioning the church I serve toward God's mission of making disciples I chose pastors with similar situations.

I interview four pastors. The first, Dr. Stephen Russell, is serving a church in Dennisport, MA on Cape Cod. He is a native of South Africa who, along with his wife, Dalene, and their two daughters moved to Cape Cod twelve years ago to pastor New Life Christian Center. Their church was a traditional charismatic church that was in decline. In South Africa, Stephen worked with an evangelistic association as director of discipleship follow-up after evangelistic crusades in various cities. He also planted a church and Christian school, which welcomed all sectors of South African society.

The second pastor, Rev. Sam Huggard, is the District Superintendent of New England for the Evangelical Free Church, a position he has held for two years. His previous ministry experience included youth work with Young Life, serving as a pastor of youth and discipleship at the Barrington Evangelical Free Church in New Hampshire, and

as a church planter/senior pastor for ten years. He planted a church in Alton, New Hampshire, which is a community similar to Bourne, MA.

The third pastor, Rev. Shane Good, is the pastor of English Lake Church in North Judson, Indiana. Started by Shane's father, English Lake Church is located in a small, rural farm community. They are now a part of the Salt and Light family of churches based out of England. This church originally started as a traditional evangelical church, is in the process of becoming a missional-based church following the principles of Mike Breen and 3DM ministries. Shane is also in the process of planting a church in West Lafayette, IN.

The last pastor, Rev. Aled Griffith, has been a part of Salt and Light churches in England for many years serving as pastor, missionary, and on the national leadership team. Recently Aled was the lead pastor of a large church in Derby, UK with the task of helping the church transition from a traditional church model into missional communities. That transition was not successful. Three years ago, he led a team to plant a church in Nottingham, UK based on the missional model of 3DM ministries. This church is growing and thriving.

The Interviews

Dr. Stephen Russell²

Dr. Stephen Russell is the lead pastor of New Life Christian Center in Dennisport, MA. He felt led to Cape Cod because of God's clear call for him and his wife to go to the nations. Upon arrival to Cape Cod they were offered the lead pastor position in the church they currently pastor.

Stephen's passion for ministry comes from a desire to see broken-hearted people restored by the Father's love into a relationship with God, that not only forgives sin but also restores them fully as children of God. His desire is to see the devil's kingdom emptied and Christ's kingdom enlarged. Helping believers understand the implications of their identity in Christ and setting a strong foundation of faith upon which new believers can grow in Christ are key elements of his ministry. Stephen believes that a strong, practical theological understanding is important for every believer to be grounded in Christ. Stephen is of the opinion that discipleship is a missing ingredient in much of church life today.

When Stephen and Dalene assumed the leadership of New Life, which was planted by the previous pastor, the congregation was in serious decline. The church was founded on the Word of Faith movement where the goal of Christianity was to receive all the blessings of God for oneself. They found the people of the church inwardly focused on the benefits they had in Christ. When Stephen talked about reaching out

2. The interview was on March 14, 2018.

with the gospel, the church members didn't think it was necessary. Actually, the idea of evangelizing was a frightening prospect for the church. During the first years of ministry, Stephen had to gently tear down the misunderstandings the church had about the gospel and Christian life. Those were painful years with many of the original members choosing to leave the church rather than change. The first thing Stephen and Dalene did was to present a vision of the church as a safe place, as a family founded on God's love where trust was established. This family atmosphere became the springboard to missional living and reaching out to many broken people in their community.

The idea of being a spiritual family was a major foundation stone in their ministry. With a large number of broken families and people caught in addiction, being a part of an extended family was very attractive. The shift toward mission happened slowly and quite naturally as people in the church began to realize they had something as a family to offer the world. Mission was not something you did alone, but together as a family. Everyone had a story to share about what Jesus has done in their life. Stephen taught them to tell their friends and family about how Jesus had changed their lives. Their changed lives became evidence of the work of God. Instead of knocking on doors and talking with people they had never met before, mission was simply hanging out with their friends and telling them their story.

The idea of every believer as a missionary took time for the church to accept. Many were offended that someone from South Africa would come and tell them to become missionaries to their neighbors. As Stephen taught on the Kingdom of God, and how God's kingdom is in conflict with Satan's kingdom, the church began to look at their

community differently. The church members were well acquainted with the work of the devil's kingdom, and when they saw the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives, they were given a reason to give themselves to God's mission. They wanted to see their friends experience new life.

I asked Stephen how he redefined evangelism from the traditional sense of sharing the gospel as propositional truth, to living life together in God's Kingdom. He told me that it was a trial and error process. His people took courses in evangelism about how to present the gospel. However, at the end of the program or course, they still didn't know how to contextualize the good news into everyday life. So as a church they decided to start with following Jesus with all their hearts and let God lead them to the people He was preparing. They asked, "What has God given us?". They discovered that they could talk about their life together as a church family, that is, how to love, honor, and respect one another. As non-believers entered into their church community and saw how church members treated one another, which was in sharp contrast to their experience, the non-believers naturally wanted to know why. Of course, the answer was Jesus. Sharing who Jesus is by living out his or her love for Christ in community was something everyone could do. This gave a context for the content of the gospel to be shared effectively.

This process took time. Little by little through Sunday messages and through practical courses on healing and overcoming addictive behaviors, Stephen and Dalene earned the trust of the church. When people have a strong foundation in Christ, it keeps them from going astray. Gal 4:19, which reads "My dear children, for whom I am again

in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (NIV), is a key verse for Stephen. The Apostle Paul talks about the hard work of forming Christ in others. It is a series of baby steps moving toward wholeness, and each step is to be celebrated. For Stephen, this is the hard work of making disciples. In his work with the evangelistic ministry in South Africa, Stephen sought to follow up on the twenty-five thousand decisions made for Christ each year. After one year he said that typically only five percent remained active in local churches. He believed the problem was with the churches who did not have a clear understanding of how to form Christ in new believers.

In their church's transition from a consumer, self-centered view to a missional view, Stephen met with resistance. Since about ninety-five percent of the people in his church were ex-Catholics, the idea of good news just did not exist. For them, the gospel was about judgment and punishment. As sinners, they had to pay penance for their sins. They thought "I better get my life right and do the right things because the judge is coming." They did not have good news to give. A clear teaching on salvation dissipated this resistance to grace. Another area of resistance came from older Christians in the church who didn't like the idea of inviting people with physical or mental handicaps, or recovering addicts into the church. They only wanted "their kind of people" in the church. Stephen explained that the gospel is for all people. They eventually left the church.

The idea of the church as a spiritual family is deeply embedded in Stephen and thus in the church he pastors. Stephen told a story of eight single women who grew up in broken homes. Dalene began to teach them that to be a daughter of the King means

they are worthy of respect. Being involved with the church as family, they saw what it felt like to be treated with honor and respect. Eventually, this broke the unhealthy cycle of falling into relationships with abusive guys who did not treat them with respect. Others would come to the church and reject the idea of family because the only family they knew was dysfunctional. When they were loved and accepted unconditionally, being shown the love of Christ, they began to open up to the good news.

For Stephen, developing a leadership team was crucial for moving the church forward. He trained his leadership team to be flexible and to look for what God was saying and doing. As he took small steps toward implementing his vision he talked about the process with his leaders. The best leaders are those who can live among the church members and help to communicate the direction of the church to the people. Slowly the church body began to connect the mission of God with the broken lives they encountered in the community. Stephen met with his leaders twice a month in scheduled meetings. Once a month they met to talk about church issues and once a month they shared a fellowship meal and simply spent time together. Twice a year they met for a whole day planning retreat to clarify vision and pray for one another. Stephen was also in contact with his leaders weekly through email, text or meeting for coffee.

At first, discipleship was comprised of the pastor's Sunday morning message and Bible studies during the week. Stephen felt that this was insufficient to develop mature disciples of Jesus. He wrote a six-week study booklet on the basics of the faith to be used as a one on one discipleship guide. The mentor and the disciple both read the booklet daily and would meet weekly to discuss what God was saying through his Word.

The booklet had set scriptures to read daily with a short commentary on the day's topic. It was a simple way to involve everyone in discipleship. Even young believers can bring new believers through the basics and gain a refresher themselves in the process. Stephen and Dalene also developed courses to help people deal with life's issues like addiction, rejection, the need for emotional healing, as well as practical issues like handling finances. Growing in maturity is a natural part of being a part of a family. Discipleship was not a function of the classroom but of people sharing life together and helping one another grow in Christ.

One regret Stephen had in the process of change was losing the original people in the church when he arrived. It is hard to keep people who have their own agenda or ideas of how the church should operate. Since they were not open to Stephen's leadership they eventually left the church. One thing Stephen would do over is to start the process of moving the church toward being a family on mission sooner. Establishing a clear vision and focus for the church helped to quell the infighting taking place when Stephen first became the pastor. Becoming a spiritual family where broken people and dysfunctional families could see a model of life and wholeness was a key element to Stephen's vision. As individuals moved toward healing and wholeness it had a ripple effect in the community.

The time of transition for Stephen's church was about two to three years. For New Life Church the transition was quicker than usual due to the number of original people who left. Stephen believes that the transition is predicated on a spiritual

awakening or revelation of the biblical purpose and function of the church. Without that revelation from God Christians will gravitate to what they know.

When asked about suggestions, advice or warnings for anyone leading a church toward mission Stephen shared four things. First, discover and build your leadership team. Lead them into a vision for God's mission. Second, expose the church to the various gifts in the Body of Christ to help expand the church's perspective and thinking. Third, lead the church into an understanding of why God has placed them here in this place. Four, emphasize personal stewardship and responsibility for their own lives before God.

Today New Life Christian Center is a healthy church serving in one of the most depressed areas of Cape Cod. They have a reputation in the community as a church who cares for hurting people. Their missionary context allows them to bring the good news of Jesus to people who are overlooked by the community at large. They are refreshing the lives of many people by simply offering 'a cup of water in the name of Jesus'.

Rev. Shane Good³

Shane is the lead elder at English Lake Church in North Judson, Indiana. Also, he, along with his wife Erin, is planting a church in West Lafayette, Indiana. Shane brings a unique perspective growing up in this small town church where his father was the pastor. English Lake Church was a typical evangelical church with a strong Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night ministry and with an active ministry

3. The interview was on March 24, 2018.

program of Sunday school, youth group, Bible studies, and men's and women's ministries. Every summer they conducted a large Vacation Bible School.

Shane's parents were naturally missional even though the church was not. His parent's home was opened to anyone who had a need, whether that need was for a meal, or counsel, or a place to stay. Shane watched his parents' counsel people through alcoholism, broken marriages, and a host of other issues. Their passion for ministry rubbed off on Shane. However, Shane went through a time of questioning starting during his college years and continuing for about ten years. It was not until after he married Erin that the Lord captured his heart for good. After a year of Bible College, Shane returned to minister in the church he grew up in.

His first ministry was with the youth group. Shane ran the youth program at the church as well as coaching sports teams and volunteering in the school system. Following his parents lead, Shane began to minister to the unsaved youth in the community who responded well to him. He discovered that most of the kids in the community would never set foot in the church or be involved in the church youth group. There was a clear distinction between church youth and the rest of the town youth. He had about one-fourth of the youth in town in his youth group, yet Shane felt the need to reach out to the youth who did not know Jesus. He developed a ministry called the "Front Room" in a storefront in the center of town. Youth would drop by to talk, get help with homework or just hang out. As young people from the town came to Christ, Shane began to think about the best way to disciple them. Some of the youth tried to integrate into the church program but were not readily accepted by those in the church.

The church people were slow to embrace the brokenness they saw in some of those coming to Christ. Something had to change.

Shane's heart was for the mission of God. He was motivated by scripture passages such as 2 Cor 5:17-21 where the Apostle Paul talks about the ministry of reconciliation given to the church. God's heart is big enough to even include the enemies of Israel as seen in the book of Jonah. In Gen 12, Abraham's blessings include all the nations of the earth. Shane began to see how Jesus in his incarnation came to make disciples and it changed his perspective on ministry. Going to Bible school in England and spending time with missionary friends in post-Christian Europe showed him what incarnational ministry really looks like. Returning to North Judson, naturally, Shane wanted to apply what he had learned.

Upon returning from Bible school Shane's father was preparing to retire and the church leadership asked him to be the lead elder. Shane agreed on the condition that they allow him to pursue mission within the community along with the responsibilities he had for the church programs. Over a two-year period, the leadership saw the fruit of Shane's outreach ministry. They came to realize that God was calling the church to be missional in their focus due to the success of Shane's ministry. The leaders made the transition to a missional understanding and model of ministry fairly quickly. The church body took longer to accept the change in vision and direction. What convinced church people of the validity of the mission was the changes they saw in the children's friends when they came to Christ. The fruit of the ministry of the Holy Spirit inspired people to want to be involved.

There was resistance within the church membership. People wanted to reach out to the community, but they did not want to be radical about it. When those without Christ showed up with all their problems and lifestyle issues some of the folks in the church wanted the messes cleaned up quickly. The elders were pressured to write position statements on topics like marriage and living together, on drug and alcohol use, and other issues. The pace of growth toward Christ and sanctification was much too slow for them. How should the church handle the social problems prevalent within our society? Some in the church wanted to allow new believers to have the space to discover God's truth through scripture, while others felt the leadership should simply command them to stop sinning. The leaders decided that the integrity of the mission required them to allow the time and space for new believers to work throughout their own sanctification under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Another area of vocal concern was the shift from a lead pastor, one person in charge, to a team leadership style of government. Church people felt neglected because of all the attention being given to the newly saved. They wanted the pastor to care for them. Additionally, there were other people who felt left out when they were not invited to be a part of certain groups on mission.

Through the transition years, about one-third to one-half of the people in the church left for other churches. It was a difficult time for Shane as many of the wealthy people left. Upon reflection, Shane believed that the pace of change was too quick. He and others were excited about the mission and reaching dying people and did not take the time to win over the church body. He believes he should have taken greater care to

help people see the vision for mission and adapt to the changes. Since Shane's gifting lay in the area of evangelism, he would have worked more closely with a mature pastoral person if he were to do this again. One thing they did late in the transition process was to gather a team of people who were respected by the congregation and had some influence. The elders would share their heart and vision with this team, as well as brainstorm ways to draw the church body together for the sake of the mission. These people would then communicate the vision to their friends in the church. Shane wished he had developed this team earlier. Another way the church leaders helped the church make the transition into missional living was to tie it to their church history. This transition toward mission was fulfilling the vision upon which the church was founded.

In the transition process, Shane tied the shift toward missional life with the values of the church when it was started many years earlier. This transition was simply living out their founding core values and taking a natural step in growth as a church. When the church body saw that this transition was a part of living out their calling, they did not lose any more people.

One of the key elements in the transition toward mission was the call to make disciples. As a church, they had been faithful to lead people to Christ and help them grow in Christ-like character, but they did not disciple people into the mission. Some people naturally embraced a lifestyle of disciple-making, but most did not. Most church members did not see themselves as being missionaries to their community. Instead, they invited their friends and neighbors to attend church programs or services in hopes they will hear the gospel and respond. Seeing God move powerfully outside the walls of

the church building through the gifts of the Holy Spirit healing lives and relationships inspired many to join the missional movement. Shane taught his church to see that the gospel is more than just personal salvation but involved expanding the Kingdom of God into our communities. Church members began to see their responsibility in the Kingdom of God and were willing to move beyond the consumer mindset of personal blessings. Now about fifty adults out of two hundred are actively engaged as missionaries in the community and are actively being disciplined.

English Lake uses the discipleship process developed by Mike Breen mentioned in chapter three. The Huddle is the centerpiece for disciple-making. Huddles develop leaders who then lead small groups. Learning is both contents based as well as Spirit-led. The small groups and one-on-one discipleship relationships are where people get to know one another. Discipleship occurs through these relationships as people help guide others in discovering how God wants them to live. During the summer the church hosts a Bible School where teachers are invited in for a week to share God's truth. Every Sunday there is an adult equipping hour offering practical courses and discussion on practical issues like stewardship. English Lake church seeks to balance teaching the content of scripture with the living out of God's truth practically. Shane introduced books like *The Shape of Things to Come*⁴ by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, and *Emerging Church*⁵ by Dan Kimball and *Miraculous Movements*⁶ by Jerry Trousdale.

4. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013).

5. Dan Kimball, *Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

6. Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

The traditional ministries of the church such as Sunday school, Vacation Bible Study, small groups, etc. continued to operate during the transition to mission. However, their focus shifted from church-based to mission-based becoming what Shane called the tip of the missional spear. These activities provided a point of contact for mission. The Vacation Bible Study was moved to homes or town parks for greater accessibility for their neighbors. Men's and women's ministries, and Sunday morning classes shifted to a teaching-equipping focus. Missional communities were introduced through small groups and were encouraged to meet more often. All the ministries of the church were fine-tuned toward the goal of making disciples.

English Lake Church took about five years to make the initial transition to a missional communities format. Shane thinks their transition was too quick and would have taken more time if he were to do it over. Ideally, Shane believes it will take eight to ten years for a church to make this transition into a missionary culture. Some churches may transition more quickly especially if they have gone through a crisis that has cleared the deck for a change.

Rev. Sam Huggard⁷

Rev. Sam Huggard is the district superintendent for the New England district association of the Evangelical Free Church of America, a position he has held for the past two years. Prior to this Sam was the lead pastor of a church he planted in Alton, New Hampshire for ten years. Sam grew up in a strong Christian home and attended a

7. The interview was on March 15, 2018.

Christian school where he learned quite a bit of biblical knowledge. His first introduction into ministry came through working with Young Life. He discovered that during his youth he was removed from any interaction with non-Christians. In college, Sam did an internship with Young Life and was struck by his own judgmental attitude towards non-Christian youth. After college, he went to work with Young Life because he desired to learn how to connect with those who needed Jesus. Though he was not good at youth ministry Sam was exposed to incarnational ministry that changed his life. It was through his work with Young Life that God placed a desire in Sam to start a church on the principles of incarnational ministry.

One of the core values of Young Life was incarnational ministry. You had to be present and get to know the youth if you wanted to have any influence with them. Sam took this principle and applied it to reaching adults. In preparation for planting a church, Sam worked as a youth pastor in his home church while his pastor mentored and trained him for three years. At this same time Sam's home church, Barrington Evangelical Free Church, was going through a similar paradigm shift. They were outgrowing their building and faced the option of building a larger building or planting other churches. They chose to plant more churches.

Working with adults in church planting proved more difficult than ministry with Young Life. There was no school system or structure already established. They had to find a way to connect with working families with busy lifestyles. Jesus' instructions to his disciples in Luke 10 provided a context for ministry. Sam and his core team prayed and sought out people of peace in their neighborhoods. Jesus did not begin with attracting a

crowd but developed his core team and sent them out. Sam followed this pattern. Like Jesus, Sam did not wait until his team was perfect but sent them out as missionaries. Since most of his church were young families with children, they got involved with athletics and other community activities in order to form relationships with non-Christians. Everyday life became ministry opportunities. Although they had Sunday morning services and invited people to attend worship, their primary focus was on incarnational ministry.

For Sam, the mission of the church was to go into the community, the schools, the workplaces and neighborhoods as representatives of Christ and His Kingdom. The people in his church were investing their lives into the community where they lived. They were committed to becoming a part of the fabric of the community rather than being an exclusive church community. This approach to ministry was fruitful and the church grew to about 175 in five years in a town with a population of five thousand. At about the five-year mark the church moved into more of a maintenance stance. The emphasis subtly shifted from outreach to attraction. The church relied more on the Sunday morning service and programs to attract people into the fellowship. When this happened, the attendance began to decline. They found that a focus on incarnational ministry and a disciple-making way of life was necessary for the church to keep growing.

Sam had to lead the church out of a maintenance position back into a missional way of life. For Sam, the pulpit was the key to reorienting the church community back to their original vision and values. He emphasized the gathered and scattered aspects of church life. The church gathered on Sunday mornings in order to be equipped for

mission as they scattered during the week. He taught that the nature of the church was not something Christians do on Sunday morning, but the church is God's people sent out on mission. He also developed a Leadership Community as a place to talk about the mission of making disciples. The Leadership Community was the most helpful decision he made. Out of the Leadership Community emerged a group of leaders who were willing to lead home groups, which would be the context for making disciples. Sam led the church away from an organizational business model into an organic family model. The purpose of their church was to demonstrate God's love through disciple-making communities that live as family sent on mission.

Along the way, Sam made his share of mistakes. One mistake Sam made was trying to motivate the people of his church by scolding them for moving away from their vision. Sam received good coaching to help him process his own angst and learn how to lead the people of God rather than attempt to drive them. The motivation for change must be founded on our relationship with God. He calls us into a relationship with him that contains a mission. As the church moved back towards its original mission Sam amplified the role of the scattered community. They changed their small group Bible studies into small family oriented communities where they could discuss life and mission together. They created a way of life for the church that was lived out in the small groups. In fact, Sam and his colleague, Foye Belyea, wrote their way of life in a book, *The Five Stones*.⁸ This book was a primer into the way their church would live out their devotion to Christ and provided a pathway for discipleship.

8. Foye Belyea and Sam Huggard, *The Five Stones* (Minneapolis: NextStep Resources, 2015).

Ideally, the church leadership desired that each small group would function organically on its own. However, some structure was needed. The small group leaders functioned as spiritual parents in leading their group. In hindsight, Sam wished that he added more structure and direction, especially to the one-on-one elements of discipleship.

As a church plant, they intentionally did not develop traditional ministries like Sunday school, youth group, men's or women's ministry. They had very little programmatic structure. As they grew as a church there was pressure to develop these ministries, which they resisted in order to maintain their missional ethos. One example of a creative way they met the needs of a growing church was their youth ministry. As young families, most had middle school age children. The town had little to offer their children, so they developed a mission-based youth group not only for their children but also for their children's friends. With no church building, the group met in homes. Their family-oriented approach to youth ministry made a great impact on the town. The church was able to bring the gospel to the community.

As a district superintendent, Sam regularly works with churches that desire to develop a missional ethos. He uses a curriculum called *Life Flow* that leads church leaders through a process of developing incarnational ministry.⁹ This process involves deconstructing the old paradigm of church life and envisioning the missional model of

9. Life Flow is a process of deconstructing and reconstructing developed by Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson of Praxis Church Development Center. Seven training components that start with 'The Crossing' that is aimed at helping people understand the process of crossing from a cultural paradigm of Christendom into a missional paradigm of church life. It helps to change our understanding of ecclesiology from a cultural lens to a biblical lens. The end goal of the process is developing a disciple-making way of life that is contextualized for their community.

ministry. In his experience, Sam has found that *Life Flow* is a two to five-year process. Sam has also found *The Tangible Kingdom*¹⁰ and its accompanying workbook to be very helpful.

Through his years of experience, Sam recommends that pastors do not try to take short cuts with the process. Moving toward a missional way of life is not a program to be added to the church, but a reorientation of how the church lives out the missionary call of God. Being an ambassador for Christ has to be rooted in one's identity in Christ. We are given the ministry of reconciliation because we have been adopted into God's family. Ambassador represents the kingdom to which they belong. When we belong to Christ, and we become sons and daughters of the King, we have the privilege of bringing the message of God's kingdom to lost people. Sam warns that learning the content of missional living without the heart change (deconstruction of the old paradigm) will not generate missional activity. This is a work of the Holy Spirit who establishes God's people as his church sent on mission.

Rev. Aled Griffith¹¹

Rev. Aled Griffith is the lead pastor of the Community Church Nottingham in the United Kingdom. This church was started three years ago as a missional community church plant. In addition to his responsibilities overseeing the church Aled oversees seven area churches and has leadership responsibility in the national and international Salt and Light organization.

10. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2008).

11. The interview was on March 23, 2018.

Aled had a dramatic conversion as a young man and was trained through the Youth With A Mission organization. He was involved in church planting soon after he became a Christian. In the first year, he witnessed many people coming to Christ. As a young Christian, Aled was mentored by leaders who had a radical vision of the church released to be all that it could be. This stirred and released God's apostolic call on Aled's life.

In the early 1990s Aled was involved with the Community Church of Derby in the United Kingdom. The church leaders were interested in reaching the suburbs of Derby. They believed that starting smaller size communities in the suburbs under the umbrella of the larger church would create a church multiplication movement. They began what was an embryonic missional movement with one church in many locations. Then in 1997 the senior leader was influenced by Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Church and changed the church from a multi-site missional movement to one location, big building church with many programs. Aled calls this "an attractional, guest service Sunday morning approach" to church ministry. Over the next five to six years the Purpose Driven approach worked very well in the sense that the attendance doubled in size.

In 1998 Aled left for college and Bible training to learn how to multiply churches through church planting. When he returned to Community Church of Derby, he didn't recognize it. As a large, attractional church only a few highly qualified and trained people could lead in ministry. The majority of the job of the church members was to invite people to the Sunday service and various programs the church was offering. Spontaneity was lost. Church people became passive and consumers of the services the

church offered. Large churches have the resources to start good ministries to the poor, and to the drug and alcohol addicts to name a few.

Even with all the success the church experienced in growth, there were a group of people who wanted to start missional communities. With an influx of immigrants from the Middle East, missional communities were established to reach out to Muslim refugees. Several of the missional communities were effective in sharing Christ within the refugee communities. In nearby Sheffield, Mike Breen was developing the practical expression of missional communities. Aled and several others were trained in this ministry model. As Community Church of Derby began to return to the roots of its original vision, the church asked Aled to return as its senior leader to lead the church into a missional discipleship movement. However, leading a large church with many programs from a consumer-driven, attractional model into a missional model of church life is challenging.

Though the leadership of the church was in agreement with the shift toward mission, many of the people in the church body were not in favor of the change. Aled was faced with 'comprehensive resistance'. He discovered that the means used to attract people to the church are the means needed to keep them there. In essence, when someone joins a church there is an unspoken expectation or 'contract' between them and the leaders. The people who came to Christ during the attractional years understood the church in one way. For them, church was a worship service they attended with all the programming associated with it. When the leadership decided to return to a mission focused format these people felt betrayed and resisted. They came

to the church with a specific understanding of what church was all about, and when it changed, they did not want it. Aled needed to gain their permission to make that change.

However, those who joined the church during the transition bought into the mission focused model. The church was split over which model to pursue. To make matters worse, the former pastor who still had oversight over the church returned. It was decided that Aled would take those who wanted to develop a missional church and start a church in nearby Nottingham. After three years, the church plant has four missional communities with a membership of well over one hundred people, many of the members were new believers.

Aled learned several things about leading a church through change. First, he learned the power of church culture. It takes time to change the culture of a church no matter what its size. Changing the structure without first addressing the needed changes in the culture will not produce good results. Second, he learned that to be successful in the transition, he needed to spend time needed to bring the middle adaptors along. He did not pay sufficient attention to the interests of those who succeeded best under the attractional model to help them picture themselves in the missional model. Third, he underestimated the gravitational pull of the Sunday meeting. The intensive nature of the Sunday programming of a large church can suck all the energy and life of the church into it. People measured the success of the church based on the success of the Sunday meeting. To have energy available for mission, some things

will need to shift in the church's programming. Leaders will need to change the scorecard of what makes a successful church.

From his experience working with several churches, Aled offers this wise advice to pastors who want to lead their church into mission. Realize that it will take twice as long as you think it will. Do not blow the church apart in the journey. Take time to talk with people in a relaxed way, and to listen to their concerns. If you are not pastorally gifted, invite someone with a pastoral gift to advise you in the transition. They will know if you are moving too quickly. Always seek to link the vision to an appropriate practice. For example, don't just talk about prayer; bring people on prayer walks into the mission field. Field trips to other churches already living missionally will give people a picture of what can happen in their church. Work on changing the perspectives of people who are skeptical and seek to convince them through a new vision. There will always be those who will refuse to change. They may need to be released to find a different church.

Some of the key elements of missional ministry are evident in Community Church Nottingham. Aled and his core team began with moving into neighborhoods and meeting the people who lived there in any way they were able. They met their neighbors, attended birthday parties, and hosted game nights as a means to share life with non-Christians. Aled focused on training and releasing leaders of missional communities. Aled has been meeting with his leaders twice a month in Huddles since 2015 helping them to be missional in practice. Everyone on his leadership team is now leading a missional community. Developing leaders who lead by example is crucial to the mission.

Another key aspect of missional communities is developing a discipleship process. Huddles are the discipleship process for training leaders. Small groups are the means for developing disciples in a community. Part of that process is learning to understand one's gift and shape for service in the kingdom. Learning communities are day-long discussion seminars where leadership teams from several churches meet for intensive learning. The advantage of learning together with other churches reminds you that you are not alone in the process, and there can be good cross-pollination of ideas and best practices. Leaders can only lead others into the life they are living.

Summary

Each pastor and church setting are unique and yet they had much in common with how they guided their churches through the process. I appreciated the unique insights from each of the pastors interviewed. Though their gifts and backgrounds are different, there were common threads of lessons learned woven into each of their experiences. Those common threads can provide invaluable insight to those embarking of the journey of transition toward being a missionary church. The following are the themes I have discerned from the interviews that hopefully will be helpful in moving from maintenance towards mission.

- Work of the Holy Spirit
- Discipleship Is A Way of Life
- God's Word Must Inform Our Practice
- Leading the Church Into A New Way of Living

- Changing Our View of Church
- Letting the Structure Serve the Mission.
- Redefining Leadership
- Importance of Understanding God's Mission

In chapter five I will develop each of these themes as I reflect on the wisdom of the interviews, which I conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE

A STRATEGY FOR MOVING FROM MAINTENANCE TOWARD MISSION

Reflections on the Interviews

Through these best practice interviews, I have learned that leading a church on the journey of re-missioning is a delicate process that requires faith, patience, skill and much prayer. In the interviews that were conducted, my goal was to discern their best practices so as to aid other church leaders, including myself, in transitioning churches from maintenance to mission. This chapter will discuss the lessons learned both from the successes and failures of those who have gone before.

I appreciated the unique insights from each of the pastors interviewed. Though their gifts and backgrounds are different, there were common threads woven into each of their experiences. Those common threads or themes can provide invaluable insight to those starting the process of transition. In this chapter, I want to present some of the ideas that will lead us on the journey toward becoming a missionary church. The final section of this chapter will outline the practical strategy for moving First Baptist Church into becoming a missionary church.

A Work of the Holy Spirit

My first thought upon reflection was that the process will take more time than I had expected. Every pastor cautioned about forcing the process to move too quickly. There are no short cuts, packaged programs, or sure-fire methods to move a traditional church toward missional living. In each case the circumstances were unique and the

process the Holy Spirit initiated in each church body addressed their distinctive needs. Therefore I would conclude that the re-missioning of churches is a work of the Holy Spirit renewing the call to be God's sent people. As Jesus came full of grace and truth, filled with the Holy Spirit, so traditional, evangelical churches in the twenty-first century will be challenged to rediscover life filled with the grace, truth, and love of the Spirit.

The church of Jesus is created and sent on a mission by the Father and the Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit. For the church to be sent requires intentionality. To whom are we sent and how? In John 20:21 Jesus sends his disciples out into the world in the same way the Father has sent the Son. Ministry is not simply telling people the message of the gospel; it must live out the message as well. Incarnational living means expressing the fullness of Jesus' life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Incarnational ministry is not a program but a lifestyle to be lived outside the walls of the church building. As Jesus encountered many messy situations in his ministry, so will any church that seeks to bring the gospel into everyday life. Representing Jesus in our neighborhoods, at our workplaces, and in our relational networks is more than sharing a canned gospel presentation or inviting people to Sunday service. Incarnational living means believers going to and befriending those who do not know Christ so those non-believers may see that Christ is alive. In the four interviews, I appreciated seeing how church communities sought to incarnate the life of Christ through loving those far from Christ. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit has the power to reveal the life of Christ through faithful disciples who give themselves to God's mission. The stories of these four churches are an encouragement to press forward.

Discipleship as a Way of Life

One thought, in particular, confirmed my belief that discipleship is a way of life, not a class or a program. In Matt 28:18 Jesus commissioned his church saying, "As you go, make disciples . . ." (NIV). In going about our everyday life we are to be aware of our call to disciple those whom God has given to us. Sharing the life of Jesus in us with others is meant to occur naturally, and intentionally, as we display God's love to others. Seeing all ministries as incarnational means that evangelism and discipleship are part of the same process.

Jesus' ministry set the example of making disciples. He did not start with trying to convince the crowds but called a few to follow him and be with him. He gathered his disciples to himself, taught them his way of life, and let them watch how he ministered. Jesus taught them a way of living, not just academic principles. After three years, his disciples were able to impart Jesus' way of life to the young church formed on the day of Pentecost. For Jesus, disciple making was imparting a way of living that honored the Father and furthered the mission of God's Kingdom.

Discipleship is helping people discover and grow in a relationship with Christ. Shane Good and Aled Griffith shared from their experiences how people in their churches reached out to broken and messed up people and saw their lives changed. Incarnational ministry and discipleship go hand in hand. It does not matter if a church is reaching out to the poor or rich, everyone's life is broken in so many ways. The good news is best received when someone takes the time to build a relationship bridge.

Discipleship, the impartation of life from one to another, is best imparted through personal, open relationships.

I also learned that discipleship occurs most naturally within a faith community. One-on-one discipleship is important, however, the scriptures state that edification or the building up of the Body of Christ occurs best within a community (Eph 4:12-13; 1 Cor 12). In Shane Good's, Aled Griffith's and Sam Huggard's churches growth in church members was greatly enhanced when they were in groups. In the Community Church Nottingham, the missional communities were able to reproduce themselves fairly quickly as a result of being together on mission.

Stephen Russell shared a vision of the church as a spiritual family on mission. In Sam Huggard's church the need to disciple their youth presented a unique opportunity to think outside the box and develop a ministry plan involving the whole community. Making disciples is the only commission given to the church. Jesus not only provided for our salvation, but he also modeled a way of life that involves making disciples. Jesus invited his disciples to come along with him and learn his way of life. When we make disciples, we are passing on Jesus' way of life. Discipleship is the outcome of a way of life; believers letting their light shine. The church is sent into the world with God's mission of making disciples out of all nations.

God's Word Informs our Practice

Education in our day largely has been reduced to knowledge acquisition. It is assumed that if someone has been taught in the classroom, they know how to put it

into practice. The church for the past several hundred years has used the classroom model of education for their discipleship method. Knowing something is true doesn't necessarily mean that it is put into practice. James tells us that faith without works is dead (Jas 2:17). The truth of scripture put into practice is the goal of discipleship. Mature disciples are those who practice the truth of God's Word. I appreciated Stephen Russell's passion for building a solid theological foundation into his people. Disciple-making has a biblical content that replaces the deception and lies people receive from the worldly culture. The truth about our identity in Christ brings about humility and willingness to serve others. The truth about the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit enables believers to trust in God's strength and not rely on their own. Every truth in scripture must be aligned with a corresponding attitude, motivation or practice in the believer. When the church community seeks to be incarnational, truth and practice are married together. God's mission is to reconcile people back to himself and to restore God's image that was marred by sin. Mature disciples of Jesus reflect more clearly the image of God.

Jesus' parable of the house built on the rock versus the house built on the sand illustrates clearly that our obedience (practice) must follow the hearing of God's Word. The man who built his house on the rock is the one "who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" (Matt 7:24 NIV). The foolish man who builds on the sand is the one "who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice" (Matt 7:26 NIV).

Leading the Church into a New Way of Living

I appreciated our discussion on the causes of resistance in churches moving toward mission. There will always be resistance to any change in a way of life. A major shift in paradigms can cause tremendous angst. In every interview, the pastors regretted seeing people leave the church family because they could not agree with the changes that were occurring. It seems that moving from maintenance to mission will always result in some people leaving. Helping them to leave well may be the only option. However, both Shane Good and Aled Griffith blamed leadership decisions for some of the loss. In Shane's case, he moved too quickly and didn't give people an opportunity to process the change in direction. With Aled, the leadership within the church backed away from their commitment to return to a missionary vision. In this case, the people lost were those who started a new church based on a missional community vision. Fortunately, the leadership recognized the need for a fresh church plant in Nottingham. With Stephen Russell, he inherited a church paradigm that couldn't be fixed without some people leaving.

Changing a church's operating system produces resistance to change. The issues that resulted in the push back will need to be addressed. Several ideas were suggested in our interviews. First, take the time to discuss and process the need for change with the leaders and influential church members. Presenting a clear biblical vision for the church as the expression of God's Kingdom and His mission is a good starting place. People need the time to study, ask questions and consider what scripture teaches about the nature and calling of the church. Secondly, evangelism and discipleship should be

seen as obedience to Christ and not just growing the church organization. When believers understand God's purpose and will for His church it becomes easier to lead people through the change. Presenting a clear vision or picture of the future will also help people to consider the changes. We must remember that the church does not exist for our benefit, but for God's glory and fulfilling His commission.

There is a tendency for people to resist any change that alters what they can expect from their church. As Aled Griffith said, "The means that you use to attract people are the means you have to use to keep them." As people join with a church body there is an unspoken contract that is put in place. People attend churches that will meet their needs and provide the pastoral care they are expecting. They join churches because the corporate values of the church body agree with their values. When leaders seek to move from maintenance (or attractional) to mission there is a corresponding change in some of their corporate values. Unless permission is given, there will be resistance to the move. Changing the culture of a church starts with allowing church members the time and space to discern God's will. It is here that the leadership must move at a pace that allows the people to process the change. I have seen that biblical teaching by the pastor followed by open discussion with church members, trusting in the Holy Spirit to lead everyone to understand God's will, can yield positive results. Sometimes when churches are in rapid decline there is a willingness to make the changes necessary to change their direction. However, for God's mission to be fully embraced the church will need to hear God's call and respond in faith to that call.

Another area of resistance is the fear or apprehension within the hearts of church members. Stephen Russell discovered that the people in his church were reluctant to engage in evangelism because of fear of rejection. Complacency is another hindrance in moving toward mission. When church members believe that the church exists for them, or that they own the church then there is no desire or motivation to change anything. The consumer mindset is strong in our culture, and churches that exist to meet the needs of those who attend will find themselves trapped in that mindset. Consumerism should be addressed pastorally, helping people renegotiate their covenant with the church. In addition, as Shane Good did with his “Front Room” youth ministry, it would be good to invite people to experience outreach ministry in a safe place. Developing a pilot venture or going to observe the ministry of another church could be options to consider.

Another way to help minimize the resistance members may have to changes is to make many small changes that gradually shift the culture and practice of the church. Inviting people into the brainstorming process and including them in the small changes is also beneficial.

Changing our View of Church: Understanding our Ecclesiology in light of our Missiology

The movement from maintaining the status quo in church (struggling to keep the doors open) to a church that engages the mission of God to make disciples means a change in view of the nature of the church. Inherent in each interview was a desire of each pastor to bring his church into a new understanding of God's church. Aled Griffith,

Shane Good, and Sam Good were all willing to organize their church around mission. Each pastor was willing, though reluctantly, to see a reduction in their Sunday morning attendance because they chose to make disciple-making the mission of the church. The church, that is the people who make up the community of the redeemed, were bought with a price and belong to Christ. The ministry of Christ's church is to carry on his ministry throughout the earth. The church community is to reflect the image and nature of Christ by living as Jesus lived, and by adopting the passions and motivations of Jesus.

In the traditional church, the goal of the church is to sustain the institution of the church through its ministries and programs. More people are needed to finance their ministries and serve in its programs. In God's economy, the goal of the church is to fulfill the mission of making disciples. The ecclesiology of the church is meant to serve the mission of God. Unfortunately, the mission of the church often serves its ecclesiology.

The process of shifting from a church centered to a mission centered vision is unique in each setting. In New Life Christian Church on Cape Cod, Stephen Russell emphasized the church as the family of God. The broken people from broken families in Dennisport can find a family, a secure place to be loved back to wholeness. The church is not an organization, but a spiritual family with the mission of rescuing lives from destruction through holistic discipleship. Stephen has designed the ministries of his church to meet this calling. For Shane Good and English Lake Church, the idea of the church being an incarnational community where Jesus can be seen in and through the relationships takes new meaning. The missional communities developing within this church provide a safety net for the town of North Judson. Instead of the church existing

for its members, church members give themselves for the Lord of the harvest as they serve their town. Nottingham Community Church in England was founded on the principle of missional living. With a Sunday morning worship service occurring once a month, the church community has more time and energy to pour into building community and reaching out to those without Christ. They meet weekly from house to house in various forms to encourage one another and make disciples. Their understanding of the church as the family of God joining with God in his mission is visibly seen in their pattern of gatherings. Sam Huggard, both with his church planting experience as well as his current work as District Superintendent promotes the need for the church to be about God's work. Redefining the church as a community that exists to do God's will versus an organization that exists to benefit its members is a radical shift in our understanding.

Letting Structures Serve the Mission

God's mission has a church. This profound statement challenges the traditional church, which believes that the mission is among many things it has to accomplish. Is God's mission one aspect of the ministry of the church, or is God's mission the sole ministry of God's church? The mission-centered church will reorganize church structures and life around fulfilling God's mission. Jesus taught in the parable about wineskins, "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins" (Mark 2:22). Jesus was referring to the legal structures of the Old Covenant,

which would not be able to contain the wine of the New Covenant. By analogy, the same is true with church structures today. The rhythm and framework for ministry in the traditional, evangelical church are focused on preserving the church as an institution.

The new wine of incarnational, missional living cannot be contained within the old framework. The life of the church community needs to be reevaluated to allow for the expression of God's mission into the world. From the interviews, I learned how other churches are structured for mission. Meeting in homes rather than a church building brings the church community closer to those they endeavor to reach. Restructuring leader development from a classroom lecture to the interactive dynamic of the Huddle (or any small group format) where lives are shared more intimately, produce organic leaders rather than program managers. Huddles meet around a shared meal and deal with plumbing the depths of God's call and the development of God's character as a part of leadership development. The Nottingham Community Church structures every church gathering around the discipleship of others through missional community gatherings and small groups. Shifting the life of the church from a Sunday morning service where most people observe to a smaller, informal setting where everyone can participate in releases gifts and encourage leaders to rise up.

Another hindrance in the movement toward mission is the energy needed to maintain the Sunday services and programs. Aled referred to this as the 'black hole' of Sunday morning. The larger the church, and the more extensive their ministry, the more difficult it will be to find the time and energy to develop missional communities. This is

why church planting can be an easier way to develop missional church. Each one of the pastors interviewed faced the challenges of a consumeristic and materialistic Sunday morning congregation. The problem with wineskins is most evident here. I learned the importance of shifting the structure and rhythm of church life away from impersonal programs in favor of promoting organic community life. This needs to be done carefully and prayerfully.

Let me add that none of the pastors interviewed was against the corporate gathering of the church for worship and encouragement. The church in the New Testament is pictured as the gathered and scattered people of God. The hindrance to mission is not in the public gathering of the church, but in the expectations of the people when they gather. The shift away from mission to entitlement on the part of God's people can be subtle and swift. We exist to serve God's mission; God's mission does not exist to serve us!

Redefining Leadership

Building a culture of discipleship requires the training of leaders. The more decentralized the church becomes the more leaders will need to be trained. In traditional, evangelical church culture the leader is the person who stands up on Sunday morning and preaches. In the church structured around missional communities, leaders become spiritual parents. Leaders are to lead by example. Leaders, like Jesus, invite others to journey with them. The most effective leaders are those who lead from the front line of ministry. A leader is someone who has influence in another person's life. In

each of the interviews, I conducted we spent time discussing the importance of mentoring qualified leaders.

Developing a Leadership Community gave Sam Huggard an opportunity to model and teach the vision for missional ministry. For Sam, the Leadership Community met one a month as a forum for discussion and the opportunity to grow together. Sam could share his vision for the church and share his life with these leaders. The Leadership Community became the means for releasing people into leading small groups and mission endeavors in the community. Aled Griffith had a similar group in the initial Huddle of his church plant. Three years later he told me that everyone in his initial Huddle is leading a missional community now. As a leader, he is reproducing himself. For Aled, training leaders are the only way to multiply the church.

Stephen Russell made the training of leaders in his church a top priority. They have developed a leadership-training module where leaders not only learn scripture but also learn how to lead and influence others. Shane Good said that leaders couldn't take people where they have not gone themselves. Leaders cannot give away what they do not have. Shane has developed leadership Huddles where leaders for the mission and for the ministries of the church are developed. A leader development component is indispensable for preparing to reach the harvest.

Understanding Our Mission – To Make Disciples

Jesus' Great Commission to his church is to make disciples as a way of life. Literally, in your 'going' make disciples. When combined with the Great Commandments

of loving God with your whole being and loving your neighbor as yourself, we have the essence or core of Christianity. Essentially, Christianity is based on two loving relationships that propel the church into the mission of making disciples. A disciple is a learner, one who is learning how to love the Triune God with all their body, soul and strength, and learning how to love all others created in the image of God. Discipleship is inviting others to learn how to prioritize these two relationships. A disciple is devoted to Christ, devoted to Christ's Church and devoted to Christ's mission. A vision for making disciples goes well beyond convincing people to join your church, attend your worship service, and policing the behavior of believers so no one is caught in sin. The church is the community of people transferred out of darkness into the light of Christ, the community of people on whom God has lavished his love and grace, a community of people who have been set free from the penalty and power of sin that they may freely love others to wholeness and health. This is our mission.

I appreciated the passion for the gospel I saw in each pastor I interviewed. Each within their own community and context were seeking God for his strategy to reach those who need to experience the grace of God. Even with tears in the eyes of some, they shared their passion for the church to grow up and be all that God intends it to be. The move from maintaining what we have, to receiving all that God has for his church is not a matter of bullet point strategies and charts, but a passion in the hearts of God's people to see the blessing of God's salvation and the fullness of his Kingdom imparted to the lives of their neighbors and friends. Such a passion is the work of the Holy Spirit breathing the life of God into our souls. Our mission is not a business contract, but the

invasion of the Reign of God into our lives, families, workplaces, and cities calling people home to the Triune God who created them. The men I interviewed are committed to developing leaders who can lead God's people into making disciples who in turn will disciple others.

We do need to receive our strategy from the Lord. A strategy will give direction and a course for our love for God and others to flow. The next section will give the details of a preliminary strategy for pastors of transitioning churches to consider.

A Strategy for Moving from Maintenance to Mission

Assessment

Nehemiah went out at night to secretly assess the damaged walls of Jerusalem before he devised a plan for rebuilding the walls. Assessing a congregation for strengths and weakness is a good place to start. Many good assessment tools are available. I am using the Natural Church Development Survey,¹ which is an assessment tool that measures church health. Choose an assessment tool that fits best within your context.

Going through a transition process is challenging. I would recommend finding a mentor or coach to help guide pastors and leadership teams through the process. Everyone I interview had someone coaching him through the process. A coach can also help with the assessment. My coach helped me to discern what was important to the mission. I found it beneficial to inventory the amount of time and energy I gave toward maintaining the operations of the church and what I invested in moving the church

1. Information about this assessment tool can be found at www.ncdchurchsurvey.org.

forward in mission. It was shocking to realize that most of my relationships with people were within the congregation and very few contacts with non-Christians. Were the members of my church intentional about developing relationships with non-Christians or were they focused on family and church friends?

Evaluating how we treated one another and welcomed those who were new to our fellowship revealed areas in which we needed to grow. Our assessment revealed strong relationships with one another, but a lack of intentionality in reaching out beyond our circle of friends. Part of every assessment involves clarifying goals and vision. We are in the process of doing that.

Following Jesus into His Way of Life

As a pastor it is important to gain an understanding of God's vision for his church. The interviews affirmed much of my reading about the missional movement and creating a discipleship culture. I found that each pastor was dismayed by the passive condition of the contemporary church. It is the responsibility of leaders to lead from their own convictions and passions and lead people into a dynamic relationship with the Lord. Jesus still calls men and women to leave all and follow him into his way of life. In the Lord's Prayer, we are taught to pray for God's Kingdom to become a reality here and now as it is in heaven. Where the Kingdom comes, God's will is done. It is God's will that his people follow Jesus example and way of life.

In John 14:6 Jesus tells us that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We understand who the Father is by seeing Jesus, and we live out of the reality of God's

Kingdom by following Jesus as his disciples. The Way is not a method or a program of self-help, but the person of Jesus. Learning to follow after Jesus, to love and live as he did, is the goal of discipleship. Each of the pastors interviewed was leading their congregation to pattern their life after the example of Jesus, and equipping every member to serve the Lord in their unique way. This is the primary mission given to the church – to make disciples who love the Lord, who love one another, who grow in the fruit of the Spirit, and who lead others in following Jesus.

Pastors have many opportunities to inspire their congregation to follow Jesus with their everyday lives. On Sunday morning I seek to present the big picture through sermons that help us see who God is, who we are, and how we can serve God. Small group Bible studies, leadership community and personal conversations over a cup of coffee give me an opportunity to discuss some of the new concepts I am presenting on Sundays. Since it took me time to process the new paradigm of missional living, so I am allowing others the same courtesy.

I am amazed at how patient and gentle Jesus was in teaching the concepts of the Kingdom to his disciples. He opened his life to them, teaching by example and giving them opportunities to minister healing and deliverance to others as he did. The apostles followed Jesus, even when they didn't understand his teachings. One time, Jesus taught that unless a disciple eats his flesh and drinks his blood, he can have no part of Jesus' life. The crowds left, but the apostles stayed because Jesus had the words of life. Instilling a vision of following Jesus into his mission will propel his church forward.

Build a Discipleship Culture

Every church has a culture. Some church cultures are healthy and others are destructive. As leaders, we are given the responsibility to mold and create a culture that honors God and his mission. Changing a culture requires a dismantling of the previous culture in the minds of people and a building of the new culture. The culture of a church is the lens through which the people of the church understand who God is, who they are, and what God has called them to be and do. Church culture has been influenced by American culture far more than imagined. Deconstructing the current consumer-oriented, self-centered, materialistic American culture that has found its way into the church needs to happen if the church is to reconstruct a culture based on God's Kingdom. Discussion groups, outside speakers, books read together, and specific seminars that address this area are all helpful tools in changing a culture. I have found that there are always sacred cows that may need to be sacrificed. As the Holy Spirit leads us through the deconstruction of the old paradigms, the sacred cows are exposed as unbiblical and often are willingly set aside for the sake of the mission.

At First Baptist, we are working hard to create a culture of discipleship. We encourage everyone to pray for someone and to share the truth they have. We want to release people from false limitations to be all that Christ created them to be. We look for every opportunity to show the wisdom that is resident in the Body of Christ so that together we can have the confidence to grow in the Lord.

Model Community

Look for every opportunity to gather people together for discussion and shared life. Bible study groups and Sunday school classes can be repurposed to include sharing life together. Leadership team meetings can include a shared meal together in someone's home. Church business can take a back seat to praying for the needs of your town or city. Take time to listen together to the solutions the Lord may have in answer to prayer. Leaders can go on prayer walks together to spiritually survey the land. In all these gatherings discuss the need to transition from a "Come to us" church to a "Go to them" church. Listen to the questions and concerns of those who are processing the change in vision.

As people respond to the change in the vision, they will need help in giving permission for the change in mission. Invite them to join with others in discovering God's mission for the church. Celebrate the small steps that are taken as well as all attempts to live on mission.

Redefine Church Life

One of the greatest challenges in creating a missional culture is redefining what it means to be the church. Many of us were trained to grow an organization and maintain a church worship program where success was measured by the number of people attending, the size of one's budget or building. Most Christians know that the church is not the building. Yet, we still talk about 'going to church', and 'inviting people to church'. The church is the gathering of God's people who are surrendered to Christ,

equipped for the mission, and functioning as a community of people who love the Lord and love one another. Take time to decompress from the cultural understanding of church and immerse yourself in the biblical expression of the church as the Body of Christ.

Reproduce Disciples

Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2 "Entrust truth to reliable men who can teach others" (NIV). The leaders in the first-century church were able to reproduce disciples by the rabbinic method of Jesus. Developing a simple pathway for reproducing disciples who can then impart what they have received to others is critically important. How will your church reproduce disciples who love Jesus, love others and can in time disciple someone else in the way of the Lord? Fusing truth with practice is the key. Showing new believers how to grow in the relationship with the Lord through the practice of spiritual disciplines establishes them in their identity as a son or daughter of God. Leading new (and old) believers in developing healthy relationships within the Body of Christ, and learning to love others with God's love, creates a healthy community. Training others in how to share their faith and invite others on a journey towards Christ advances the cause of Christ.

The path of discipleship is holistic, involving every aspect of life. The curriculum is the issues of life as they happen every day. People learn how to steward their finances when they are in a crisis and need to learn to manage their budget. People learn to forgive when someone has wronged them and the wound is fresh. We are developing

simple rhythms of life that allow for the mentoring of believers to take place in the context of natural relationships. There is a need for simple, reproducible forms of disciples making in the church today.

Reproduce Leaders who lead by Example

Biblical leaders are those who lead by modeling the truth they teach. Every Christian is a leader in the sense that they have an influence in the life of another. Parents are the spiritual leaders of their children. Christian bosses are the spiritual leaders over their employees. Everyone sets an example with his or her life. As a church moves from maintenance to mission the need for leaders will increase. One pastor can easily maintain a small traditional church, but that church will not be able to multiply disciples. A mission-centered church will grow by multiplication of leaders and communities. Leadership skills can be taught. Character is developed through personal discipleship.

Leaders are developed out of the Christian community of the church. Paul appointed elders in the churches he planted by looking for those mature men and women who shouldered responsibility. How did he know? The people of the church pointed them out. For a church to engage with God's mission there will need to be a process for training leaders who lead by example.

How Long O Lord?

The process of moving a church from maintenance to mission can be a long journey. It may even involve several leaders in succession for as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor 3:6 (NIV), "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow". The consensus of the pastors I interviewed was the process of deconstructing the old paradigm and rebuilding the new paradigm of mission can take upwards of eight to ten years. Enjoy the journey for it is about leading God's people into missional fruitfulness. As long as people desire to move forward, lead them. There are churches for a variety of reasons that will not make the journey from maintenance to mission. This topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

A Strategy for First Baptist Church of Pocasset

In remodeling a house the old, outdated structures need to be torn down and removed before the reconstruction can take place. In the same way, the old outdated paradigms of Christendom must be uprooted from the hearts and minds of those in the church. Jesus taught that new wine could not be put into old wineskins successfully. Churches founded on the traditional concept of Christendom will need to first go through a process of deprogramming the old paradigm before the renovations that lay the foundation for a missionary church. In any remodeling project, the deconstruction takes time and can be messy, yet it is vital that the process be thorough.

A biblical analogy is found in John 11 with the story of Lazarus. Lazarus, a close friend of Jesus, became ill and died before Jesus arrived. His sisters Mary and Martha

were grieving and understandably upset with Jesus' delay in coming to them. Yet, Jesus has another plan in mind. Rolling back the tombstone Jesus commands life to return to Lazarus who awakens from the dead and stumbles out of the tomb wrapped in grave clothes. Jesus tells the astonished crowd to unwrap the grave clothes off of Lazarus so he can live again. The church can be like Lazarus - dead in old traditions and understandings of church and ministry. Jesus awakens the church and its leaders to the new possibilities of missional living, but the church still has grave clothes of the old way of life wrapped around her. The old ways will hinder the new expression of the life of Christ contextualized for a post-Christian world. Lazarus must be unwrapped of the old and clothed in the new. The process of revitalizing a church moving it from maintaining what it has towards the challenging quest of joining God's mission involved remodeling and clothing the church body in the new life of discipleship and mission.

The following is an outline of the process:

1. Identify the grave clothes of the Christendom paradigm that need to be removed.
 - Assess for strengths and weaknesses.
 - What are the current goals of the church ministry?
 - Redefine the pastoral task from chaplain to apostolic leader and spiritual parent.
 - Redefine Christianity as a way of life following Jesus, not just a system of belief.
2. Discover the biblical role and purpose for
 - The Church as the people of God sent on God's mission.
 - God's mission.
 - Nature of the Kingdom of God as a reality for today.
3. Rebuild an understanding of
 - Intercessory prayer ministry focused on reaching the harvest field of our neighborhoods.
 - The biblical values of the church.
 - A vision for disciple-making as a way of life.

- Church life as a spiritual family on mission (God's people in community), not an institution that conducts religious services.
- An expanded view of the gospel of the Kingdom of God, not just personal salvation.
- God's mission to make disciples who submit to God's Reign.
- Redefine mission as the task of bringing the church to non-Christians, sharing the good news of Jesus in understandable ways, and making disciples who will make disciples.
- Following Jesus and learning to live as he lived.

4. Develop a Disciple-Making Culture

- Design a leadership pathway for developing new leaders.
- Evaluate every ministry and adjust them to fulfill the mission of making disciples.
- De-emphasize the importance of Sunday morning worship so that incarnational communities can find the time and energy to reach out to non-Christians.
- Develop avenues where people can learn to live incarnationally as they serve their neighbors and friends. Look for people of peace.
- Design a pathway for discipling people unto the Lord and his mission.
- Define a way of life for the church community that includes a rhythm of worship, Christian community, and missionary outreach.
- Develop small groups and missional communities that form the basis for life on life discipleship.
- Form missional communities in neighborhoods of Bourne as God leads.
- Develop environments where church members can experience biblical community.
- Help church members understand their natural and spiritual gifts and equip them to serve God through their gifts.

This outline covers some of the leading ideas of the process of moving from maintenance towards becoming a missionary church. Our church has already started the process of deconstruction of the old paradigms over the past three years. I have preached sermon series on understanding the nature of God's Kingdom as being a present reality as well as a future hope. Another sermon series dealt with the nature and purpose of the church defined in scripture as God's people sent on a mission, not a building or institution. We spent six months discussing intercessory prayer and then

started a church-wide prayer initiative targeting the specific non-Christians who live in our neighborhoods. And I have taught on the missionary call of God for every Christian to take seriously the Great Commission. Every sermon series has been discussed by our Leadership Team and within our Leadership Community meetings. Our Leadership Team has read *The Tangible Kingdom* by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay. As a result of our discussions, I would say that the core membership of the church is embracing the new vision for being the church.

Our church consultant (coach) has led us through a discussion on defining the values and vision of our church. We discovered our core values are prayer, the study of God's Word so as to practice it, caring relationships (biblical community), and inspiring worship. Last year we began praying in our neighborhoods for those who need Christ in what we called "Neighborhood Prayer Clusters"². Our goal in this initiative was to create the first step toward incarnational living. Meeting the people we live near or work with and finding out their needs can open the door to spiritual conversations. As a result, people have met their neighbors and are developing relationships with them. Several are having on-going spiritual conversations.

We are in the process of developing a way of life that will include spiritual formation, a practice of specific spiritual disciplines, and a path for disciple-making. Moving forward we will eventually end our Tuesday night Bible study and incorporate it into neighborhood small groups that will have a missionary focus. Our vision is to

2. See an outline of our Neighborhood Prayer Cluster initiative in Appendix C.

develop, as God leads and enables, missional communities in the villages of Bourne. The Prayer Clusters are the missionary seeds of these new communities.

We have developed a ministry to the Alcoholics Anonymous groups that meet in our church building. Every week members of our church watch their children during their meeting, playing games with them and on occasion helping them with their homework. We pray for the community every week and members of AA often submit prayer needs through a prayer box we supply. Someone from our church welcomes the group at the start of their weekly meeting. Every year we host a cookout for the AA community in the summer and include them in our annual picnic. We are praying and looking for every opportunity to bring the good news of Jesus to the AA community and hopefully, this year will start an AA Bible study to explore the spiritual side of the Twelve Steps.

I have started a Leadership Community where we discuss what it means to be the church on mission with God. As we engage the culture of Bourne and serve as God leads we believe that God will give divine opportunities to share the gospel. Our desire is to equip God's people for the work of ministry, reaching out into our community with the hope of Christ and making disciples out of those who respond. First Baptist is still in the beginning stages of developing a disciple-making culture and missional communities. We still have much work to accomplish in developing a church culture of discipleship. As the culture of our nation grows darker, we believe that the light of Christ in his followers will grow brighter if we display the same humility and love that Jesus displayed in his incarnation.

Our vision as a church is to plant missional communities in every village of Bourne as the Lord leads and enables us. As the missional communities grow each has the potential of becoming a church body on their own. Our desire in church planting and multiplication is to develop churches where intimacy is not sacrificed for size and where many churches joined together in vision and covenant can accomplish more than each alone. This decentralized vision for church planting fits well with the geographic nature of the villages of Bourne.

Charge

My final encouragement is for church leaders who have been stirred as I have been by the Lord to desire a greater expression of the life of Christ and God's Kingdom rule in and through the church. The following quote by Tod Bolsinger was taken from *Canoeing the Mountains* sums up the task before us.

We need to press on to the uncharted territory of making traditional churches missionary churches. How do we do that? Frankly, not with another seminar on being a missional church, not changing the labels on our committees or the names of our churches, not through rearranging organizational structures and not creating new denominations. Traditional churches will not become missionary churches by fiat or tweaking. There are no quick fixes and no easy currents to drift us lazily toward our collective goals. Traditional churches will only become missionary churches as those in authority (and even those without formal authority) develop the capacity to lead their congregations through a long, truly transformational process that starts with the transformation of the leaders and requires a thoroughgoing change in leadership functioning.³

Let's press into all that the Father has for us. God is renewing his church in the twenty-first century. As the Apostle Paul writes "Not that I have already obtained all

3. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, 2015), 38-39.

this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12-14 NIV).

APPENDIX A

Doctor of Ministry Project Best Practice Interviews Glenn Stone

Pastoral Interview Questions

1. What is your name, current ministry, and title/role in that ministry?
2. What is your passion and motivation for leading your current ministry?
3. What led you to embrace a missional focus in your ministry moving from the attractional/program driven model?
4. What do you see as the overall purpose or mission for God's church?
5. What is the biblical basis for the ministry method you are using?
6. How did you and your church leadership make a decision to transition into a missional model of ministry? What resistance, if any, did you face from your peers or those within your church?
7. Transitioning a church from maintenance to mission can be a challenging task. As a leader, how did you navigate the waters of transition and keep your church from sinking? What mistakes did you make? What did you do well? Where are you in the process?
8. What are the key elements that you see as important for ministry in a missional context? How are they working in your church?
9. How do you disciple people in your church (or develop an intentional culture of disciple-making)? What is your process? How did you decide on this process? How long did it (will it) take to implement?
10. How did you disciple the leaders in your church into this new perspective? What books, resources, etc., did you find helpful?
11. How did the traditional ministries of the church (men's and women's ministry, youth ministry, children's ministry) change or develop as you embraced a missional emphasis?
12. What do you think is a realistic timeline for transitioning a church into understanding and embracing the mission of God?

13. What suggestions, advice or warnings to you have for anyone seeking to lead their church from survival or maintenance mode into being on mission with God.

APPENDIX B

The Interviews

This is a summary of the content of the interviews I conducted. The discussions are presented in the form of each pastor's answer to the interview questions. My desire is to give a detailed presentation of their answers to the questions asked.

What is your passion and motivation for leading your current ministry?

Stephen Russell is motivated by a desire to see the broken-hearted restored to the Father and to help them understand their identity as a child of God. Believers who have been restored to the Father are then enabled to bring the Kingdom of God into the world. He is motivated to see the devil's kingdom emptied and Christ's kingdom enlarged. The second motivation in ministry for Stephen is to set a strong theological foundation in the hearts and minds of believers. He recently received his doctorate in this area because he thought it was so important. Stephen and Dalene came to Cape Cod because God called them to the nations. They originally thought they would be in Europe because the need there was so great, but God confirmed the call to Cape Cod.

Shane Good is motivated in his current ministry by his desire to spend time reaching out to people who need Jesus. Shane's parents were very influential in developing Shane's heart for mission. They set a powerful example for Shane growing up, as he saw them reaching out to broken people who struggled with alcoholism, broken marriages and other issues. His parent's passion for ministry rubbed off on him.

Aled Griffith is motivated by an apostolic, big-picture vision of God's glory filling the whole earth through the ministry of the church. The redemptive story of God's kingdom captured his imagination. He desires to be used by God to release God's church to be all that it can be. Aled commented, "All ministry is really people gifted by Jesus to equip the church for the works of service."

Sam Huggard's motivation for ministry came from God's call to ministry and his work with Young Life and high school students. Sam grew up in an evangelical church and attended a Christian school. In college, he was exposed to the ministry of Young Life and realized he had no understanding of how to relate to non-church kids. Working with Young Life challenged and 'blew up' his paradigm for ministry. His work with Young Life planted a vision of incarnational ministry, which has as its goal-producing disciples of Jesus. He believes God wired him to engaged in God's mission of reaching the lost and making disciples. Through his ministry with Young Life, a desire to plant a church with a mission ethos began to grow within Sam.

Each of the pastors interviewed had a similar call from God and a passion to reach the lost through relationship and to make disciples.

What led you to embrace a mission focus in your ministry moving from the attractional or program-driven model to an equipping, mission-based model?

Stephen Russell shared that the church was inwardly focused when they first arrived. The congregation was interested in the benefits the church had to offer them. They were schooled in the Word of Faith theology, which heavily promotes the benefits of knowing Christ for every believer. Consequently, they were not interested in, or even aware of God's call to reach out to the lost. The first thing Stephen did was to create a safe place for the church to become family, where mutual trust formed the basis for the church family to engage together in God's mission as a lifestyle. Stephen discovered broken people in his church and the surrounding community. Becoming a spiritual family helped people to heal and form good relationships. The shift toward mission happened slowly over time, not because they were told to, but because the church members realized that they had something as a family to offer the world. Testimonies and stories about how Jesus was working to change people's lives helped make the shift toward mission real.

Sam Huggard, one of the core values of Young Life is 'incarnational ministry'. In order to reach high school students, one has to be present and available to the students and be known by them. As he saw the lives of youth changed by the gospel, Sam wondered if the same principles could be applied to the church. Working with adults had different challenges. One challenge was the lack of a central gathering point for mission. With Young Life, the school system provided a home base. Drawing from John 1:14 which reads, "The Word became flesh and moved into our neighborhood." (MSG), Sam tweaked incarnational ministry and called it 'residential ministry'. Christians are called to live among those they seek to reach with the message of the gospel. If the church is to move into the neighborhood and represent Christ to the people there, then the programs of the church that tends to isolate Christians from the world need to be reevaluated. Sam's church opted for the incarnational approach to ministry.

Shane Good's journey towards a missional focus is similar to Stephen Russell's. Shane's parents were mission oriented in their approach to ministry but the church they pastored was a traditional, evangelical church with an emphasis on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night services. The church was active with programs for youth, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School as well as a busing ministry. After college Shane led the youth group of fifty high school students as well as coaching and volunteering in the school system. Like Sam Huggard, Shane was reaching unchurched

kids with the gospel by being with them. However, he discovered that the students he was reaching would never set foot in the church, and if they did the church people did not readily accept them. So, Shane and his father found themselves ministering to a group of people 'on the side' while maintaining the church's ministry programs. This frustration led Shane to embrace a missional focus for ministry.

Aled Griffith said he was trained in Youth with a Mission (YWAM) and consequently was ruined for life in regards to traditional church ministry. From the Abrahamic covenant to the growth of the New Testament church, Aled sees the over-arching purpose of God is to bless all the peoples of the world through disciple-making. After his dramatic conversion as an adult, Aled became involved in church planting early in his walk with the Lord. During his first few years as a Christian, Aled was discipled by 'radical' people and saw many people become Christians. He wondered, "What it would be like if the church were to be mission-oriented?" At the time, Aled was involved with a community church that desired to reach the suburbs of their city. The leaders of the church pondered what would be most effective: one large central church or planting smaller churches in the suburbs to be "one church with many locations". They opted to plant many smaller churches that were linked together and saw an "embryonic missional movement" begin to take shape in the early 1990s.

What do you see as the overall purpose or mission for God's church? What is the biblical basis for the ministry method you are using?

In answering this question Stephen said that for the average church attendee the job of the church to evangelize the world is too big and scary. We need to keep it simple or the people in our churches will get overwhelmed. Engaging in God's mission is as simple as loving other people and looking for every opportunity to share the new life in Christ. Living under the Reign of God means taking the Great Commission seriously. For Stephen, the mission of God can only be accomplished when the church lives as a 'kingdom community'. Teaching seminars, sermons, and classes are important to give people an understanding of what the Bible teaches, but unless the information is contextualized in the lives of believers the teaching will not transform lives. The goal of God's mission is to develop a people who 'work at following Jesus with all their hearts'. The church engages God's mission by allowing the gospel to transform their lives, sharing stories of God's transforming work to encourage others to follow Jesus, and doing things that honor God.

In his church, Stephen has small group ministry to help heal broken people through developing an understanding of who God is. He believes that giving people a solid foundation in scripture about who God is, who they are, and how they are to live

(getting back to the basics) will allow all the other aspects of the Christian life to come together. Galatians 4:10 is a key verse for Stephen. It speaks of travelling until Christ is formed in people. Stephen's passion is to see Christ formed in the lives of believers, so they more and more reflect the image of Christ in their character and actions. This foundation of Christ can only be set in the context of the church as an extended family or community.

A key scripture verse for Shane Good is 2 Cor 5:17-21. God's mission is to reconcile people back to himself through the ministry of Christ on the cross. If anyone comes to Christ, their life is transformed into a new creation. God has given His church the ministry and message of reconciliation. Shane shared that starting with Abraham, God has always wanted His people to be a light to the world, even inviting Israel's enemies into the family of God. The book of Jonah was not just about obedience only, but about revealing God's heart for others. Shane commented that even the Apostle Paul based his ministry to the Gentiles on the prophecies in Isaiah. Studying the ministry of Jesus in Bible school greatly affected Shane. Jesus' incarnation made disciples. This is the heart of God's mission.

Aled Griffith sees mission rooted in the Trinity. God the Father sends his Son to earth, and the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers, and the Trinity sends the church on mission in the world. Aled believes that Jesus' model of ministry is how we are to engage with the world. Any church that doesn't have a missional focus in its DNA will not break free of a 'localized parochial view of ministry', that is a self-centered view of ministry. Quoting Ignatius, Aled believes that "the earth filled with God's glory is seen when human beings are fully alive in God." When the church is a community of people fully alive in God, they demonstrate the foretaste of what heaven will be like.

Aled agreed with Shane Good and Stephen Russell with his comment that discipleship is a way of life, not a program. Discipleship cannot be left to the professionals to do, but it is the work of the whole church body. Aled believes that we are to follow Jesus model. Jesus disciples people 'on the way' by inviting them into his life and ministry. One needs to be close enough in a relationship to imitate the character and competencies of someone more mature than you.

For Sam Huggard, the purpose and mission of God for the church is for the church, God's people, to be the presence of Jesus on the earth, bringing glory to God by reflecting who Jesus is to the world. Sam believes that Christ's presence is a 'healing and attractional force in the community'. As the community of faith lives out of the presence of God, people are drawn to faith in Christ, and the wider community is blessed by the grace of God. As Sam aptly stated, "We exist to demonstrate God's love through disciple-making communities that live as family sent on mission." Along with John 1:14,

Sam has been shaped by Jesus sending out his disciples on mission in Luke 10. Jesus didn't begin by attracting a crowd, but by developing his core team and releasing them into ministry even before they were fully trained. In church, we do not have to wait until people are perfect before releasing them into the mission. Sam found through experience that some of the roughest people had the greatest missional impact because they still had relational connections with the unsaved. Early in his church plant, Sam's church's primary context for ministry and outreach was their everyday life involvement in their community. They used their natural connections at bus stops or school events, on the job, or in town programs as opportunities to befriend people. Incarnational ministry means that they were committed to being a part of the fabric of their community.

There is a general agreement that the mission of God is to make disciples through incarnational, relational ministry rather than developing church-based programs for the purpose of outreach. The church brings glory to God when lives are transformed by the gospel. As the church, we are sent to live among the people God desires us to reach with the message of the gospel.

How did you and your church leadership make a decision to transition into a missional model of ministry? Was there any resistance?

Stephen was surprised that resistance first came against the need to evangelize. Those in the church at the time felt that since they were saved there was no need to talk about evangelism. The idea of going out to share their faith was frightening to them. The church members pictured going out knocking on doors, talking to strangers and getting laughed at. This was not what they wanted to do. Once Stephen understood what they were thinking, he said it was not a difficult transition to help believers move into a natural lifestyle of sharing Christ with their friends. Stephen taught his church about how they can use their story of what Jesus has done for them as a tool for witness. Believers are living examples of the power of the gospel to change a life. Since 95% of his church was former Catholics, Stephen had to teach them about the good news. As Catholics the idea of good news did not exist, for they were sinners and had to do penance to pay for their sin. God was a judge that they would have to answer to one day. When they understood the good news was for them and they could bring the good news into the broken community, they were ready to go.

Since Sam Huggard was planting a church with the sending church fully committed to the missional model, a transition was not needed. Those who would oppose the model did not come along. The leadership team was committed to their vision of incarnational ministry. However, as the church grew and became established

there were some people who wanted more traditional programs like a youth group or Sunday school for their children. Sam did experience some resistance from those who wanted more traditional church programs. About five years into the church plant, Sam realized that they were getting away from their core values and had to make some adjustments. Having the senior pastor of the sending church to talk about issues with was a great help. Since they were being financially supported for the first few years there were no temptations to compromise in order to pay the bills.

When Shane returned from Bible school the church leadership team asked him to be the lead elder. He was willing to assume the leadership only under specific circumstances, which included moving toward a missional model of ministry. They agreed and over a two-year period, the leadership of the church realized that the missional model was the only direction they could proceed with, especially with the fruit in Shane's outreach with the youth in the community. Though the leaders made the transition fairly quickly when they saw growth, the church body took longer. Observing the changes in the lives of troubled youth in the community was convincing to many.

The resistance to the missional model came from people who came to a traditional church with all the expectations associated with it. They were in favor of sharing the gospel with the community but didn't want to get too radical. When church programs and leadership functions began to shift, many of the older people resisted. When adopting a missional model, the leaders gave their attention toward developing missional ministries and away from maintaining traditional pastoral ministry. Shifting from a centralized model of church leadership to a more decentralized model was hard for the church to accept. In addition, broken people in the church make big messes when dealing with alcoholism, drugs, single families, couples living together, abuse, etc. Some church members wanted policy or standards statements or written by the elders in each of these areas on how to deal with sin. The good news of Jesus was mixed with condemnation and judgment. Church people felt neglected because much of the attention was given to discipling the newly saved. People's unspoken contract with the church established when they joined was changed without their outward consent. This was challenging.

The church that Aled Griffith was leading has a similar story. In the 1980's the church had embraced a missional model for ministry, seeking to be one church with many locations through planting smaller congregations in the suburbs of Derby, UK. In 1997-8 the lead pastor transitioned the church to the Purpose Driven Church model of Pastor Rick Warren. This was a dynamic change from an embryonic missional movement to building a big church building and developing an "attractional, guest services Sunday approach". This worked well for about five to six years with the church doubling in size to an attendance of about 700 people on Sunday mornings. When Aled returned from

his educational studies, the lead pastor asked him to lead this church and to transition it back to the original vision. This posed a challenge in that many people came to Christ and joined the church under the 'attractional' model and were not interested in being missional. There were still people there who remembered the former vision and were interested in moving in that direction. The transition did not go well because of the resistance to change.

Aled called the resistance comprehensive. He commented, "The means that you use to attract people are the means you have to use to keep them." So, the informal contract people entered into when they walked through the doors in the 'attractional' years was church to them. If a leader wants to change the contract he/she needs to gain fresh permission to be able to do that from the people who are in the church. Aled discovered that the people who bought into the large church model the deepest with all the programs that go with it, and who were doing quite well with it, struggled the most to change to missional. This vocal minority halted the transition. Although Aled had been clear from the beginning about the changes that would take place, and though everyone in leadership agreed, many did not think through the implications. Consequently, Aled and those who desired to be involved in a missional model were given the opportunity to start a new church in the neighboring city of Nottingham.

All agree that transitioning an established church from a traditional model to ministry to a missional model is difficult. For the transition to be successful the leadership must be in agreement and the people will need to give permission for the contract change to occur. There will always be those who will need to leave because they cannot make the transition. This is not a bad thing. A clear articulation of the missional vision is essential for people in the church body to agree to the change.

Transitioning a church from maintenance to mission can be a challenging task. As a leader, how did you navigate the waters of transition and keep your church from sinking? What mistakes did you make? What did you do well? Where are you in the process?

When Stephen Russell became the pastor of New Life Christian Center the congregation was falling apart. There was confusion over the vision and why the church existed. Stephen made small moves at a time always shifting towards empowering the vision and mission of changing lives by making disciples. Instead of making an announcement that things were changing, Stephen simply made small one-degree changes. The Sunday morning messages were a good means to plant ideas and develop the language to move the church toward health and mission. In his messages, Stephen talked about living with Christ at the center of one's life, growing in a biblical

understanding of the believer's position and identity in Christ, and their calling to be the good news to their neighbors. In making this transition, Stephen emphasized how good it was to have a competent and flexible leadership team who were willing to connect with the church body personally. Stephen led the church in clarifying their vision as a sent people of God. Gradually the congregation began to welcome broken people who walked through the front doors and see themselves as ministers of God's grace to the wider community.

One regret Stephen spoke of was not developing an understanding of the church as a family on mission sooner. He also regrets losing many of the original people in the church when he first started, although they had their own ideas of church and their own agenda for rebuilding it.

For Shane Good the transition eventually happened but not without much pain in the process. The church lost between one-third to one-half of the people in the transition. All the wealthy, prominent people left, which was difficult for Shane. One mistake Shane regrets making was the quick pace of change. In his excitement to reach the lost, Shane pressed forward with the transition to missional community too quickly and did not bring people along. If he were to do this again, he would slow down the pace of change and not give up on those who were taking longer to understand and embrace mission. Shane would also tether himself to a mature pastoral person to help people make the transition. One beneficial thing they did later in the process was to gather a team of people from the body to discuss with the leadership team the transition process. They would brainstorm ideas with them on how to draw the congregation into the mission and empower them to talk with the congregation about the changes being made and assist people in processing the change. The leaders would share their heart and vision with this group and then they would listen to the feedback. Shane wishes he had initiated this sooner.

Another idea they implemented was to connect the vision for missional communities with the history of the church. They showed how the church was founded and how the transition was consistent with their original founding and living out their calling. The transition was being faithful to God's calling on their church. After doing this they didn't lose any more members.

As a church planter, Sam Huggard did not have to be concerned with the transition at the start. Instead, he had to ensure that everyone understood the vision and the ministry model. However about five years after the church started, with a Sunday morning attendance of 175 they realized that they had shifted away from a missional model to a Sunday morning model of ministry. Eventually, the attendance began to decline because they did not have a disciple-making way of life component to sustain the attractional growth. So, they began to ask the basic questions of themselves

again. "What are we really about? Why does this church exist? What are the principles that will guide us going forward?"

In navigating the re-orientation, the pulpit was key to start the process. Sam communicated over and over again their vision, values, and the direction they were heading in. He emphasized that the church was not only something people do on Sunday mornings, but it was also God's people sent on mission. There were two functions of the church – to gather for worship on Sunday mornings, and to scatter for mission and ministry during the week. The best decision Sam made was to develop a Leadership Community group as a forum for leaders in the church to talk about their church's mission and strategy. Out of this Leadership Community, leaders emerged with a willingness to lead home groups that would reproduce disciples in a spiritual family. The end result was moving from an organizational business model to an organic family model of being the church.

When the Sunday attendance started to decline Sam responded with a bit of angst. This came out in his preaching that was more condemning than encouraging. Fortunately, there were those in the church who shared their concern with Sam, and he listened and responded. Another common mistake is to make the motivation for change purely pragmatic, that if we don't change, we will die. Although this may be true, it does not motivate people to change. True and lasting change comes from seeing who God is and who we are in light of who He is.

There are several mistakes that Aled Griffith identified. First, he did not pay enough attention to the culture of the church. Often churches will change the structure of a ministry and assume that the transition has been made. A leader can change the structure of ministry, and make it look like a missional movement, but if the culture of the church, the vision, and values in the hearts of the people, does not change, the structure will not produce fruit. Taking the time to address the culture of the church is vital to any transition.

Second, Aled did not pay enough attention to the interests of those who flourished under the previous way of thinking. He did not take enough time to discuss with those who bought into the 'attractional' model to help them see and be convinced of God's call to mission.

Third, they underestimated the nature of the 'black hole' called Sunday meetings. The amount of time and energy that went into planning and executing the Sunday morning service seemed to suck all the energy and life from everything else. Success was measured on how well the meeting went. People wanted to come and be taken care of. The whole idea of consumer mentality was overlooked.

In summarizing the strategy for transition into a new way of life, it is important to monitor the pace of change. Stephen felt he waited too long before developing the

culture of the church as a family on mission, while Shane moved too quickly in implementing the transition to mission. Making small one-degree changes that affect the church culture in a positive way is effective in introducing change. Giving the congregation early victories is encouraging to them. Do not underestimate the Sunday messages to plant key ideas into the minds of people as well as helping people see the direction the church is moving. Gather a group of people together, whether a Leadership Community or a group representative of the whole church to pray, discuss and listen to feedback encourages participation and sharing of the vision. Pay attention to the church culture and be careful of making too many structural changes unless the culture is ready. And finally, be aware of 'black holes'. Invest energy that moves the church toward mission.

What are the key elements that you see as important for ministry in a missional context? How are they working in your church?

One key element Stephen Russell discovered was keeping the focus on why the church exists. "Why are we here as God's church?" Early in his ministry Stephen was surprised at a form of prejudice he saw in his church. As they focused on being a spiritual family for the broken, lonely and hurting people in Derrisport, dysfunctional people began to come to Sunday services. Those who were healthy in the church ministered to those who needed healing. A group of people were upset that people from a group home were attending worship services. They approached Stephen with concerns about those kinds of people attending their church. They eventually left because they wanted to be with 'their kind' of people. When the focus of the church is on the mission, the cross will draw all kinds of broken people and one should not take one's eyes off the prize of making disciples.

Another key element is the power of personal testimonies. When Christ is being formed in people it brings life transformation. As people gain victory over sin and all forms of addictions it is noticeable and attractive.

Stephen's passion for establishing disciples on a firm theological foundation is another key element in developing missional communities. Theology must be contextualized into the life of a disciple so that they begin to put it into real life practice.

One of the priorities for Aled Griffith in starting Community Church of Nottingham was a desire to see the church grow by multiplication and not just addition. To multiply disciples one must start with multiplying leaders. Aled has developed a leadership pipeline through groups called Huddles. Emerging leaders who are missional in their practice and have the potential to lead or form missional communities populate huddles. They meet twice a month for intensive discipleship through discussion,

practice, and modeling by the leaders. Key questions are: "What is Jesus saying to you from his Word? and What are you doing about it?" The expectation is that they will, in turn, invest into leaders invest themselves in discipling others. In three years Aled's church plant has multiplied missional communities from one to four. All the people in his Huddle three years ago are currently leading communities. Aled found that following Jesus' model for discipleship is the key for developing leaders who can make disciples.

For Shane Good, the key element was 'discipleship, discipleship, discipleship'. Though his parents were missional in the way they lived their lives, opening the lives and home to minister to hurting people, they did not train others to do the same. People either caught it or they did not. Developing a vehicle or plan for making disciples is key to effective mission. Teaching people how to contextualize the gospel and share it well is the first step in disciple-making. Leaders must encourage the people in their church to see themselves as local missionaries. Constant encouragement is needed to help people overcome their fears and sense of inadequacy. Shane believes that the power of the Holy Spirit in believers as they serve their communities should not be overlooked. Representing Jesus to our community means that we learn to ask questions as Jesus did, that we learn to love people and not judge them as Jesus did, and that we learn how to impart his life into those we disciples, as Jesus did.

In his church plant, Sam Huggard emphasized the role of the church as a scattered community. Their small groups were not just Bible study groups but became a key environment to create community. The group leaders were the equippers to care for, prepare and release people into mission together. They created a family atmosphere with their children engaging in spiritual life with them. They created a way of life as a church community that was expressed most fully in the small groups.

How do you disciple people in your church (or develop an incarnational culture of disciple-making)? What is your process? How did you decide on this process? How long did it take to implement?

Stephen Russell's church has men's and women's groups, and 'Connect' study groups that studied books of the Bible. Stephen developed a one-on-one six-week discipleship tool called "Early Essentials" which formed the basis for one-to-one mentoring. The new person would read a portion of the text and accompanying scripture every day and meet once or twice a week with their mentor. Using this tool, the average person can begin discipling a new believer without fear. This process reinforced the idea that the church is family together. Through this process, relationships are built that become the means for future mentoring. The Bible study

groups give the content for growth and the one-on-one groups provide the means to process change.

Aled Griffith highlighted the leadership development process already discussed as the means for producing a discipleship culture. In addition, the missional communities are broken into small groups where relationships are built, and leaders lead discussions around how the Bible applies to life issues. People in the church are taught specific skills such as how to lead a Discovery Bible Study, and how to answer those who ask about the faith. Their small groups are the backbone to their discipleship process for it is through the small groups that the way of life is implemented. The missional community framework does not emphasize the Sunday morning gathering which meets once a month. Instead, more time is devoted to meeting in smaller groups and leadership huddles.

English Lake Church where Shane Good is pastor also utilizes the Huddle and small group process in their discipleship. Their Huddles provide the means to discuss how to lead others in mission. Huddles are a leader development groups providing a context for accountability and relationship. The Leadership Team is run like a Huddle. Their small groups are meant to be the place for discipleship and ministry to happen. They use the LifeShape language of Mike Breen and 3DM ministries.¹ They encourage life-on-life mentoring. Shane tells his church that every believer is called to disciple and engage in mission. Leaders ask: "Who are you meeting with, and who is meeting with you and how?" The church also provides Sunday equipping hour before the service where financial classes, marriage enrichment classes, and other practical topics are taught and discussed. During the summer they also offer Bible school training.

In Sam Huggard's church, small 'life' groups are the means for disciple-making. Sam desired that the group and one-on-one process would happen organically, that is through relationship. The leadership team presented a vision for home group leaders to be like spiritual parents to their small group encouraging everyone in the process of discipleship. In hindsight, Sam wishes he added some more structure to the process.

How did you disciple the leaders in your church into this new perspective? What books or resources did you find helpful?

Sam Huggard used material from the Conservative Congregation Christian Conference called "Life Flow". Life Flow is a process for deconstructing and reconstructing church paradigms, developed by Tom Johnston and Mike Perkinson

1. Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*. (Pawleys Island: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011). Kindle Edition – This book has a whole section devoted to using common shapes to teach discipleship principles.

through the Praxis Center for Church Development. The seven training components start the “The Crossing” which is designed to help people understand the process of crossing from a cultural paradigm of Christianity into a missional paradigm of church life. Essentially it helps leaders sort through their ecclesiology by looking from a biblical lens rather than a cultural one. The goal of the Life Flow process is to enable the church to embrace a disciple-making way of life in their local context.

In addition, Sam found *The Tangible Kingdom*² by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay along with the accompanying workbook to be very helpful. And finally, Sam co-authored a book named *The Five Stones*³ that detail their church’s way of life.

The leadership development process for Stephen Russell included meeting twice a month as a group. Once a month was to discuss church issues and once a month for sharing a meal and discussing books and articles for growth. Twice a year they would meet for a whole day retreat to pray, clarify vision and discuss how to shepherd the flock. The leaders would be in contact every week via text or phone calls. One book they are currently reading is *5 Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ*⁴ by Allan Hirsch.

Shane Good used material from 3 DM ministries⁵ mostly authored by Mike Breen. They also read a wide variety of books including *The Shaping of Things to Come*⁶ by Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *Ancient-Future Faith*⁷ by Robert Webber, *Miraculous Movements*⁸ by Jerry Trousedale, and *Emerging Church*⁹ by Dan Kimball. Some of his leaders were avid readers so reading the above-mentioned books and discussing them help those leaders see the need for change. Other leaders needed a more hands-on approach, which they saw working in the church's outreach ministry called "Front Room"¹⁰ Their church was also a part of a larger family of churches called ‘Salt and Light’. Leaders were able to be involved in mission’s trips and conferences offered by the wider groups of churches.

Aled Griffith is involved in a wider context helping churches in his network implement the movement toward mission. In his church, he inherited some leaders who

2. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

3. Foye Belvea and Sam Huggard, *The Five Stones*, (Minneapolis, MN: NextStep Resources, 2015).

4. Alan Hirsch, *5 Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ*, (copyright by Alan Hirsch, 2017), Kindle Edition.

5. 3DM is the ministry of Mike Breen for material in developing missional communities.

6. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013). Kindle Edition.

7. Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

8. Jerry Trousedale, *Miraculous Movements*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012

9. Dan Kimball, *Emerging Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

10. The Front Room was a ministry center in the middle of town where youth could come to hang out, get help on homework, or attend events sponsored by the church.

were already convinced of the need for change. For others, he suggested reading books. The books that they found helpful in shaping their understanding of mission include *Mission-Shaped Church*¹¹ by Graham Cray, *Missional Church*¹², edited by Darrel Guder, and like the others, *The Shape of Things to Come* by Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Forgotten Ways* by Alan Hirsch, *Building a Discipleship Culture* and *Family on Mission* by Mike Breen.

How did the traditional ministries of the church (men's and women's ministries, youth and children's ministries) change or develop as you embraced a missional emphasis?

In the church plant led by Sam Huggard, they had very little programmatic structure, to begin with. They met on Sunday mornings in a rented facility with no Sunday School or youth ministry. Eventually, they developed a youth group out of a need that had a missional ethos. Many families had middle school-aged children so Sam, using his Young Life background, started a home-based youth gathering that included the youth inviting their friends to come.

The traditional ministries of English Lake Church (Shane Good) became the tip of the missional spear, that is, they served as a point of contact for mission. They became a safe place for people to invite their friends to join. The men's ministry meets in homes and serves as a place for in-depth discussion on discipleship issues facing men. Their Vacation Bible School was moved to a town park and opened to everyone in the town. Small groups became missional communities to serve a specific group of people.

What do you think is a realistic timeline for transitioning a church into understanding and embracing the mission of God?

The consensus among the pastors interviewed was about 5-8 years. There are many factors that play into the time it takes to transition. In the experience of Sam Huggard in leading churches through the Life Flow process, he said that it takes the leaders at least two years to go through the deconstruct process. Stephen Russell commented that it takes two to three years for an awakening or revelation to come to the church. The transition time for Shane Good was about five years, but he believed he brought the church through the process too quickly. He believes that a church of 100-200 people could take eight to ten years to make the transition into a discipleship

11. Graham Cray, *Mission-Shaped Church*, (London, UK: Church House Publishing, 2009).

12. Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998).

culture with people engaged as local missionaries. Aled Griffith has worked with larger churches up to a membership of 8000 people and believes that five to seven years is a realistic length of time for intentional change to take place. No matter what size the church, it all depends on what happens in the senior leader and eldership level. If the leaders are not convinced there will be no transition.

What suggestions, advice or warnings do you have for anyone seeking to lead their church from survival or maintenance mode into being on mission with God?

The suggestions, advice, and warnings offered were very helpful. Aled Griffith warned not to move too fast. He suggested talking with people in a relaxed atmosphere over a period of time for the best way to help people process the change. He also recommended that everyone read about change management, especially *The Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter¹³. In developing their leaders Aled has found the concept of Learning Communities to be helpful. Learning Communities are a process developed by Mike Breen where the leadership teams from several churches gather for a day of intensive discussion around some aspect of missional living. Through these times together leaders can learn from best practices and realize that they are not alone in the process of change.

Shane Good warned not to ignore the culture of the church. He said that culture eats strategy for lunch. Taking the time to develop the underlying culture for mission will pay dividends in the end. He recommended the team approach to leading change. The quicker leaders can multiply themselves through influencing others, the quicker the church will move toward mission. He also suggested celebrating not only victories, but faith attempts, or the small steps taken along the journey. In leading a church from maintenance toward mission Shane recommended that the apostolic and pastoral gifts work together. His advice to leaders is simple – lead the change by modeling it.

Stephen Russell strongly recommended that the senior leader discover and build the leaders of the church by instilling in them the greater purposes of God and God's mission for the church. He talked about the importance of creating a safe place for the church family to grow and develop. For Stephen leading his church to understand the reason why God has called them to that specific area was important for them. Exposing the church body to outside leaders and perspectives provides a second witness to the biblical truths with which they are grappling. He also emphasized the importance of a personal responsibility to live out clear biblical teaching.

13. John Kotter, *The Iceberg is Melting*, (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2016).

Sam Huggard warned against taking short cuts in the process. Take the time needed to walk people through the change process. Leading the church toward mission has to be a work of the Holy Spirit. Without a heart change, the content alone will not generate the traction needed to engage mission. Sam warned against trying to "create mission with a stick", or trying to make people obey the Great Commission of Jesus. He said that "if mission is not happening there is a problem with the DNA" of the church body. Tacking on missional activities will not make disciples. And finally, Sam warned against developing a missional program where the people do certain activities rather than grounding mission out of who they are in Christ. It is the love of Christ that compels or urges us on to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:14 NIV).

APPENDIX C



Neighborhood Prayer Clusters

Our Vision for Neighborhood Prayer Clusters comes out of a growing desire to go beyond the walls of our church building to our town with the hope and good news of the gospel. Wherever we go, the presence of Jesus goes with us. We see ourselves as missionary teams, sent by the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit with the love and message of Jesus. Simply put, we want to be intentionally available and yielded to God for Him to use and direct us as He sees fit.

Goals:

1. To learn to live as community, loving others as Christ loved us to model the good news in everyday life.
2. To bring the life changing presence of Jesus into specific neighborhoods.
3. To discern where God is working in specific neighborhoods and join Him.
4. To pray to discern the people of peace (Luke 10) and the needs of the community.
5. To support and encourage one another in each one's 'frontline' ministry.

Outline for Gatherings: This is a list of possible things that can be done when each group meets. We do not expect everything on the list will happen each meeting. The facilitators of the prayer cluster along with those in attendance will help set the order for each meeting (and it will vary from meeting to meeting).

Gatherings should last about 1 ½ hours unless it is an outreach event.

1. Begin with a question like:
 - 'What is God doing in your life?'
 - 'Through which scripture has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you this week?'
 - 'Who are you praying for and why?'
2. Sing worship songs.
3. Share a scripture passage related to prayer or mission and discuss briefly.
4. Memorize scripture together (to use in outreach).
5. Pray for each other in the room.
6. Listen to the Holy Spirit about specific activities to connect with people in neighborhood such as prayer walks, block parties, game nights, international dinner

night, service opportunities, etc. Let the Lord direct you according to the needs and opportunities.

7. Take time to plan specific events or activities that the Lord directs to do.
8. Share ways God has led you in talking with People of Peace (God sightings and stories).
9. Have a quiet time to listen as the Lord speaks to the group.
10. Share a simple meal together.
11. Seek to be an expression of the church community and a representation of God's Kingdom in your neighborhood

Prayer Cluster Worksheet

- As missionaries with the message of the gospel, we want to enter into the life of the people we are sent to reach. Incarnational ministry means that we go to them and not them coming to us. We are planting the church in the neighborhood.
- Don't invite people to events – live communally letting others see Jesus in real life.
- Engage with the life of others until they engage in conversations about the reality of life.

Share Life

S – Serve others – find ways to bless those in your circle of friends

H – Hospitality – invite people to share in your life – more than meals.

A – Ask questions – listen, hear where people are at – listen for the question that needs to be discussed.

R – Relax – recreation is a part of life – don't press where God is not.

E – Engage – be intentional with life and calendar.

Key Questions: To whom shall I go? With whom shall I go? When should I go?

Discerning People of Peace

Who are my neighbors?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Who are the potential People of Peace in my relational neighborhood?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Pray for them – Share list and what God is saying about each person at next meeting.

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